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Eversley Edition

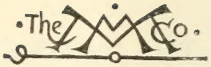
THE WORKS

OF

ALFRED LORD TENNYSON

IN SIX VOLUMES

VOLUME VI



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THE WORKS OF

ALFRED

LORD TENNYSON

VOLUME VI

ANNOTATED BY

ALFRED LORD TENNYSON

EDITED BY

HALLAM LORD TENNYSON

18170

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BECKET.

TO THE LORD CHANCELLOR,

The Right Honourable Earl of Selborne.

MY DEAR SELBORNE,

To you, the honoured Chancellor of our own day, I dedicate this dramatic memorial of your great predecessor;—which, altho' not intended in its present form to meet the exigencies of our modern theatre, has nevertheless—for so you have assured me—won your approbation.

Ever yours,

TENNYSON.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

HENRY II. (*son of the Earl of Anjou*).

THOMAS BECKET, *Chancellor of England, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury.*

GILBERT FOLIOT, *Bishop of London.*

ROGER, *Archbishop of York.*
Bishop of Hereford.

HILARY, *Bishop of Chichester.*

JOCELYN, *Bishop of Salisbury.*

JOHN OF SALISBURY, HERBERT OF BOSHAM } *friends of Becket.*

WALTER MAP, *reputed author of 'Golias,' Latin poems against the priesthood.*

KING LOUIS OF FRANCE.

GEOFFREY, *son of Rosamund and Henry.*

GRIM, *a monk of Cambridge.*

SIR REGINALD FITZURSE, SIR RICHARD DE BRITO, SIR WILLIAM DE TRACY, SIR HUGH DE MORVILLE } *the four knights of the King's household, enemies of Becket.*

DE BROC OF SALTWOOD CASTLE.

LORD LEICESTER.

PHILIP DE ELEEMOSYNA.

TWO KNIGHT TEMPLARS.

JOHN OF OXFORD (*called the Swearer*).

ELEANOR OF AQUITAINE, *Queen of England* (*divorced from Louis of France*).

ROSAMUND DE CLIFFORD.

MARGERY.

Knights, Monks, Beggars, etc.

BECKET.

PROLOGUE.

A Castle in Normandy. Interior of the Hall. Roofs of a City seen thro' Windows.

HENRY *and* BECKET *at chess.*

HENRY.

So then our good Archbishop Theobald
Lies dying.

BECKET.

I am grieved to know as much.

HENRY.

But we must have a mightier man than he
For his successor.

BECKET.

Have you thought of one?

HENRY.

A cleric lately poison'd his own mother,
And being brought before the courts of the Church,
They but degraded him. I hope they whipt him.
I would have hang'd him.

BECKET.

It is your move.

HENRY.

Well—there. [*Moves.*
The Church in the pell-mell of Stephen's time
Hath climb'd the throne and almost clutch'd the crown;
But by the royal customs of our realm
The Church should hold her baronies of me,
Like other lords amenable to law.
I'll have them written down and made the law.

BECKET.

My liege, I move my bishop.

HENRY.

And if I live,
No man without my leave shall excommunicate
My tenants or my household.

BECKET.

Look to your king.

HENRY.

No man without my leave shall cross the seas
To set the Pope against me—I pray your pardon.

BECKET.

Well—will you move?

HENRY.

There. [*Moves.*

BECKET.

Check—you move so wildly.

HENRY.

There then! [*Moves.*

BECKET.

Why—there then, for you see my bishop
Hath brought your king to a standstill. You are beaten.

HENRY (*kicks over the board*).

Why, there then—down go bishop and king together.
I loathe being beaten; had I fixt my fancy

Upon the game I should have beaten thee,
But that was vagabond.

BECKET.

Where, my liege? With Phryne,
Or Lais, or thy Rosamund, or another?

HENRY.

My Rosamund is no Lais, Thomas Becket;
And yet she plagues me too—no fault in her—
But that I fear the Queen would have her life.

BECKET.

Put her away, put her away, my liege!
Put her away into a nunnery!
Safe enough there from her to whom thou art bound
By Holy Church. And wherefore should she seek
The life of Rosamund de Clifford more
Than that of other paramours of thine?

HENRY.

How dost thou know I am not wedded to her?

BECKET.

How should I know?

HENRY.

That is my secret, Thomas.

BECKET.

State secrets should be patent to the statesman
Who serves and loves his king, and whom the king
Loves not as statesman, but true lover and friend.

HENRY.

Come, come, thou art but deacon, not yet bishop,
No, nor archbishop, nor my confessor yet.
I would to God thou wert, for I should find
An easy father confessor in thee.

BECKET.

St. Denis, that thou shouldst not. I should beat
Thy kingship as my bishop hath beaten it.

HENRY.

Hell take thy bishop then, and my kingship too!
Come, come, I love thee and I know thee, I know thee,
A doter on white pheasant-flesh at feasts,
A sauce-deviser for thy days of fish,
A dish-designer, and most amorous
Of good old red sound liberal Gascon wine:
Will not thy body rebel, man, if thou flatter it?

BECKET.

That palate is insane which cannot tell
A good dish from a bad, new wine from old.

HENRY.

Well, who loves wine loves woman.

BECKET.

So I do.
Men are God's trees, and women are God's flowers;
And when the Gascon wine mounts to my head,
The trees are all the statelier, and the flowers
Are all the fairer.

HENRY.

And thy thoughts, thy fancies?

BECKET.

Good dogs, my liege, well train'd, and easily call'd
Off from the game.

HENRY.

Save for some once or twice,
When they ran down the game and worried it.

BECKET.

No, my liege, no!—not once—in God's name, no!

HENRY.

Nay, then, I take thee at thy word—believe thee
The veriest Galahad of old Arthur's hall.
And so this Rosamund, my true heart-wife,
Not Eleanor—she whom I love indeed
As a woman should be loved—Why dost thou smile
So dolorously?

BECKET.

My good liege, if a man
Wastes himself among women, how should he love
A woman, as a woman should be loved?

HENRY.

How shouldst thou know that never hast loved one?
Come, I would give her to thy care in England
When I am out in Normandy or Anjou.

BECKET.

My lord, I am your subject, not your——

HENRY.

Pander.

God's eyes! I know all that—not my purveyor
Of pleasures, but to save a life—her life;
Ay, and the soul of Eleanor from hell-fire.

I have built a secret bower in England, Thomas,
A nest in a bush.

BECKET.

And where, my liege?

HENRY (*whispers*).

Thine ear.

BECKET.

That's lone enough.

HENRY (*laying paper on table*).

This chart here mark'd '*Her Bower*,'
Take, keep it, friend. See, first, a circling wood,
A hundred pathways running everyway,
And then a brook, a bridge; and after that
This labyrinthine brickwork maze in maze,
And then another wood, and in the midst
A garden and my Rosamund. Look, this line—
The rest you see is colour'd green—but this
Draws thro' the chart to her.

BECKET.

This blood-red line?

HENRY.

Ay! blood, perchance, except thou see to her.

BECKET.

And where is she? There in her English nest?

HENRY.

Would God she were—no, here within the city.
We take her from her secret bower in Anjou
And pass her to her secret bower in England.
She is ignorant of all but that I love her.

BECKET.

My liege, I pray thee let me hence: a widow
And orphan child, whom one of thy wild barons——

HENRY.

Ay, ay, but swear to see to her in England.

BECKET.

Well, well, I swear, but not to please myself.

HENRY.

Whatever come between us?

BECKET.

What should come
Between us, Henry?

HENRY.

Nay—I know not, Thomas.

BECKET.

What need then? Well—whatever come between us.

[*Going.*

HENRY.

A moment! thou didst help me to my throne
In Theobald's time, and after by thy wisdom
Hast kept it firm from shaking; but now I,
For my realm's sake, myself must be the wizard
To raise that tempest which will set it trembling
Only to base it deeper. I, true son
Of Holy Church—no croucher to the Gregories
That tread the kings their children underheel—
Must curb her; and the Holy Father, while
This Barbarossa butts him from his chair,
Will need my help—be facile to my hands.
Now is my time. Yet—lest there should be flashes
And fulminations from the side of Rome,
An interdict on England—I will have
My young son Henry crown'd the King of England,
That so the Papal bolt may pass by England,
As seeming his, not mine, and fall abroad.
I'll have it done—and now.

BECKET.

Surely too young
Even for this shadow of a crown; and tho'
I love him heartily, I can spy already
A strain of hard and headstrong in him. Say,
The Queen should play his kingship against thine!

HENRY.

I will not think so, Thomas. Who shall crown him?
Canterbury is dying.

BECKET.

The next Canterbury.

HENRY.

And who shall he be, my friend Thomas? Who?

BECKET.

Name him; the Holy Father will confirm him.

HENRY (*lays his hand on* BECKET'S *shoulder*).

Here!

BECKET.

Mock me not. I am not even a monk.
Thy jest—no more. Why—look—is this a sleeve
For an archbishop?

HENRY.

But the arm within
Is Becket's, who hath beaten down my foes.

BECKET.

A soldier's, not a spiritual arm.

HENRY.

I lack a spiritual soldier, Thomas—
A man of this world and the next to boot.

BECKET.

There's Gilbert Foliot.

HENRY.

He! too thin, too thin.
Thou art the man to fill out the Church robe;
Your Foliot fasts and fawns too much for me.

BECKET.

Roger of York.

HENRY.

Roger is Roger of York.
King, Church, and State to him but foils wherein
To set that precious jewel, Roger of York.
No.

BECKET.

Henry of Winchester?

HENRY.

Him who crown'd Stephen—
King Stephen's brother! No; too royal for me.
And I'll have no more Anselms.

BECKET.

Sire, the business
Of thy whole kingdom waits me: let me go.

HENRY.

Answer me first.

BECKET.

Then for thy barren jest
Take thou mine answer in bare commonplace—
Nolo episcopari.

HENRY.

Ay, but *Nolo*
Archiepiscopari, my good friend,
Is quite another matter.

BECKET.

A more awful one.
Make *me* archbishop! Why, my liege, I know

Some three or four poor priests a thousand times
Fitter for this grand function. *Me* archbishop!
God's favour and king's favour might so clash
That thou and I—— That were a jest indeed!

HENRY.

Thou angerest me, man; I do not jest.

Enter ELEANOR *and* SIR REGINALD FITZURSE.

ELEANOR (*singing*).

Over! the sweet summer closes,
The reign of the roses is done——

HENRY (*to* BECKET, *who is going*).

Thou shalt not go. I have not ended with thee.

ELEANOR (*seeing chart on table*).

This chart with the red line! her bower! whose bower?

HENRY.

The chart is not mine, but Becket's: take it, Thomas.

ELEANOR.

Becket! O—ay—and these chessmen on the floor—the king's crown broken! Becket hath beaten thee again—and thou hast kicked down the board. I know thee of old.

HENRY.

True enough, my mind was set upon other matters.

ELEANOR.

What matters ? State matters ? love matters ?

HENRY.

My love for thee, and thine for me.

ELEANOR.

Over ! the sweet summer closes,
The reign of the roses is done ;
Over and gone with the roses,
And over and gone with the sun.

Here ; but our sun in Aquitaine lasts longer. I would I were in Aquitaine again—your north chills me.

Over ! the sweet summer closes,
And never a flower at the close ;
Over and gone with the roses,
And winter again and the snows.

That was not the way I ended it first—but unsymmetrically, preposterously, illogically, out of passion, without art—like a song of the people. Will you have it? The last Parthian shaft of a forlorn Cupid at the King's left breast, and all left-handedness and underhandedness.

And never a flower at the close,
Over and gone with the roses,
Not over and gone with the rose.

True, one rose will outblossom the rest, one rose in a bower. I speak after my fancies, for I am a Troubadour, you know, and won the violet at Toulouse; but my voice is harsh here, not in tune, a nightingale out of season: for marriage, rose or no rose, has killed the golden violet.

BECKET.

Madam, you do ill to scorn wedded love.

ELEANOR.

So I do. Louis of France loved me, and I dreamed that I loved Louis of France: and I loved Henry of England, and Henry of England dreamed that he loved me; but the marriage-garland withers even with the putting on, the bright link rusts with the breath of the first after-marriage kiss, the harvest moon is the ripening of the harvest, and the honeymoon is the gall of love; he dies of his honeymoon. I could pity this poor world myself that it is no better ordered.

HENRY.

Dead is he, my Queen? What, altogether? Let me swear nay to that by this cross on thy neck. God's eyes! what a lovely cross! what jewels!

ELEANOR.

Doth it please you? Take it and wear it on that hard heart of yours—there. [*Gives it to him.*

HENRY (*puts it on*).

On this left breast before so hard a heart,
To hide the scar left by thy Parthian dart.

ELEANOR.

Has my simple song set you jingling? Nay, if I took and translated that hard heart into our Provençal facilities, I could so play about it with the rhyme——

HENRY.

That the heart were lost in the rhyme and the matter in the metre. May we not pray you, Madam, to spare us the hardness of your facility?

ELEANOR.

The wells of Castaly are not wasted upon the desert. We did but jest.

HENRY.

There's no jest on the brows of Herbert there. What is it, Herbert?

Enter HERBERT OF BOSHAM.

HERBERT.

My liege, the good Archbishop is no more.

HENRY.

Peace to his soul!

HERBERT.

I left him with peace on his face—that sweet other-world smile, which will be reflected in the spiritual body among the angels. But he longed much to see your Grace and the Chancellor ere he past, and his last words were a commendation of Thomas Becket to your Grace as his successor in the archbishoprick.

HENRY.

Ha, Becket! thou rememberest our talk!

BECKET.

My heart is full of tears—I have no answer.

HENRY.

Well, well, old men must die, or the world would grow mouldy, would only breed the past again. Come to me to-morrow. Thou hast but to hold out thy

hand. Meanwhile the revenues are mine. A-hawking, a-hawking! If I sit, I grow fat.

[*Leaps over the table, and exit.*

BECKET.

He did prefer me to the chancellorship,
Believing I should ever aid the Church—
But have I done it? He commends me now
From out his grave to this archbishoprick.

HERBERT.

A dead man's dying wish should be of weight.

BECKET.

His should. Come with me. Let me learn at full
The manner of his death, and all he said.

[*Exeunt* HERBERT *and* BECKET.

ELEANOR.

Fitzurse, that chart with the red line—thou sawest it—her bower.

FITZURSE.

Rosamund's?

ELEANOR.

Ay—there lies the secret of her whereabouts, and the King gave it to his Chancellor.

FITZURSE.

To this son of a London merchant—how your Grace must hate him.

ELEANOR.

Hate him? as brave a soldier as Henry and a goodlier man: but thou—dost thou love this Chancellor, that thou hast sworn a voluntary allegiance to him?

FITZURSE.

Not for my love toward him, but because he had the love of the King. How should a baron love a beggar on horseback, with the retinue of three kings behind him, outroyalling royalty? Besides, he holp the King to break down our castles, for the which I hate him.

ELEANOR.

For the which I honour him. Statesman not Churchman he. A great and sound policy that: I could embrace him for it: you could not see the King for the kinglings.

FITZURSE.

Ay, but he speaks to a noble as tho' he were a churl, and to a churl as if he were a noble.

ELEANOR.

Pride of the plebeian!

FITZURSE.

And this plebeian like to be Archbishop!

ELEANOR.

True, and I have an inherited loathing of these black sheep of the Papacy. Archbishop? I can see further into a man than our hot-headed Henry, and if there ever come feud between Church and Crown, and I do not then charm this secret out of our loyal Thomas, I am not Eleanor.

FITZURSE.

Last night I followed a woman in the city here. Her face was veiled, but the back methought was Rosamund —his paramour, thy rival. I can feel for thee.

ELEANOR.

Thou feel for me!—paramour—rival! King Louis had no paramours, and I loved him none the more. Henry had many, and I loved him none the less—now neither more nor less—not at all; the cup's empty. I would she were but his paramour, for men tire of their fancies; but I fear this one fancy hath taken root, and borne blossom too, and she, whom the King loves indeed, is a power in the State. Rival!—ay, and when the King passes, there may come a crash and embroil-

ment as in Stephen's time; and her children—canst thou not—that secret matter which would heat the King against thee (*whispers him and he starts*). Nay, that is safe with me as with thyself: but canst thou not —thou art drowned in debt—thou shalt have our love, our silence, and our gold—canst thou not—if thou light upon her—free me from her?

FITZURSE.

Well, Madam, I have loved her in my time.

ELEANOR.

No, my bear, thou hast not. My Courts of Love would have held thee guiltless of love—the fine attractions and repulses, the delicacies, the subtleties.

FITZURSE.

Madam, I loved according to the main purpose and intent of nature.

ELEANOR.

I warrant thee! thou wouldst hug thy Cupid till his ribs cracked—enough of this. Follow me this Rosamund day and night, whithersoever she goes; track her, if thou canst, even into the King's lodging, that I may (*clenches her fist*)—may at least have my cry against him and her,—and thou in thy way shouldst be

jealous of the King, for thou in thy way didst once, what shall I call it, affect her thine own self.

FITZURSE.

Ay, but the young colt winced and whinnied and flung up her heels; and then the King came honeying about her, and this Becket, her father's friend, like enough staved us from her.

ELEANOR.

Us!

FITZURSE.

Yea, by the Blessed Virgin! There were more than I buzzing round the blossom—De Tracy—even that flint De Brito.

ELEANOR.

Carry her off among you; run in upon her and devour her, one and all of you; make her as hateful to herself and to the King, as she is to me.

FITZURSE.

I and all would be glad to wreak our spite on the rosefaced minion of the King, and bring her to the level of the dust, so that the King——

ELEANOR.

Let her eat it like the serpent, and be driven out of her paradise.

ACT I.

SCENE I. — BECKET'S *House in London. Chamber barely furnished.* BECKET *unrobing.* HERBERT OF BOSHAM *and* SERVANT.

SERVANT.

Shall I not help your lordship to your rest?

BECKET.

Friend, am I so much better than thyself
That thou shouldst help me? Thou art wearied out
With this day's work, get thee to thine own bed.
Leave me with Herbert, friend. [*Exit* SERVANT.
Help me off, Herbert, with this—and this.

HERBERT.

Was not the people's blessing as we past
Heart-comfort and a balsam to thy blood?

BECKET.

The people know their Church a tower of strength,
A bulwark against Throne and Baronage.
Too heavy for me, this; off with it, Herbert!

HERBERT.

Is it so much heavier than thy Chancellor's robe?

BECKET.

No; but the Chancellor's and the Archbishop's
Together more than mortal man can bear.

HERBERT.

Not heavier than thine armour at Thoulouse?

BECKET.

O Herbert, Herbert, in my chancellorship
I more than once have gone against the Church.

HERBERT.

To please the King?

BECKET.

Ay, and the King of kings,
Or justice; for it seem'd to me but just

The Church should pay her scutage like the lords.
But hast thou heard this cry of Gilbert Foliot
That I am not the man to be your Primate
For Henry could not work a miracle—
Make an Archbishop of a soldier?

HERBERT.

Ay,
For Gilbert Foliot held himself the man.

BECKET.

Am I the man? My mother, ere she bore me,
Dream'd that twelve stars fell glittering out of heaven
Into her bosom.

HERBERT.

Ay, the fire, the light,
The spirit of the twelve Apostles enter'd
Into thy making.

BECKET.

And when I was a child,
The Virgin, in a vision of my sleep,
Gave me the golden keys of Paradise. Dream,
Or prophecy, that?

HERBERT.

Well, dream and prophecy both.

BECKET.

And when I was of Theobald's household, once—
The good old man would sometimes have his jest—
He took his mitre off, and set it on me,
And said, 'My young Archbishop—thou wouldst make
A stately Archbishop!' Jest or prophecy there?

HERBERT.

Both, Thomas, both.

BECKET.

Am I the man? That rang
Within my head last night, and when I slept
Methought I stood in Canterbury Minster,
And spake to the Lord God, and said, 'O Lord,
I have been a lover of wines, and delicate meats,
And secular splendours, and a favourer
Of players, and a courtier, and a feeder
Of dogs and hawks, and apes, and lions, and lynxes.
Am *I* the man?' And the Lord answer'd me,
'Thou art the man, and all the more the man.'
And then I asked again, 'O Lord my God,
Henry the King hath been my friend, my brother,
And mine uplifter in this world, and chosen me
For this thy great archbishoprick, believing
That I should go against the Church with him,

And I shall go against him with the Church,
And I have said no word of this to him:
Am *I* the man?' And the Lord answer'd me,
'Thou art the man, and all the more the man.'
And thereupon, methought, He drew toward me,
And smote me down upon the Minster floor.
I fell.

HERBERT.

God make not thee, but thy foes, fall.

BECKET.

I fell. Why fall? Why did He smite me? What?
Shall I fall off—to please the King once more?
Not fight—tho' somehow traitor to the King—
My truest and mine utmost for the Church?

HERBERT.

Thou canst not fall that way. Let traitor be;
For how have fought thine utmost for the Church,
Save from the throne of thine archbishoprick?
And how been made Archbishop hadst thou told him,
'I mean to fight mine utmost for the Church,
Against the King?'

BECKET.

But dost thou think the King
Forced mine election?

HERBERT.

I do think the King
Was potent in the election, and why not?
Why should not Heaven have so inspired the King?
Be comforted. Thou art the man—be thou
A mightier Anselm.

BECKET.

I do believe thee, then. I am the man.
And yet I seem appall'd—on such a sudden
At such an eagle-height I stand and see
The rift that runs between me and the King.
I served our Theobald well when I was with him;
I served King Henry well as Chancellor;
I am his no more, and I must serve the Church.
This Canterbury is only less than Rome,
And all my doubts I fling from me like dust,
Winnow and scatter all scruples to the wind,
And all the puissance of the warrior,
And all the wisdom of the Chancellor,
And all the heap'd experiences of life,
I cast upon the side of Canterbury—
Our holy mother Canterbury, who sits
With tatter'd robes. Laics and barons, thro'
The random gifts of careless kings, have graspt
Her livings, her advowsons, granges, farms,

And goodly acres—we will make her whole;
Not one rood lost. And for these Royal customs,
These ancient Royal customs—they *are* Royal,
Not of the Church—and let them be anathema,
And all that speak for them anathema.

HERBERT.

Thomas, thou art moved too much.

BECKET.

O Herbert, here
I gash myself asunder from the King,
Tho' leaving each, a wound; mine own, a grief
To show the scar for ever—his, a hate
Not ever to be heal'd.

Enter ROSAMUND DE CLIFFORD, *flying from* SIR REGINALD FITZURSE. *Drops her veil.*

BECKET.

Rosamund de Clifford!

ROSAMUND.

Save me, father, hide me—they follow me—and I must not be known.

BECKET.

Pass in with Herbert there.

[*Exeunt* ROSAMUND *and* HERBERT *by side door.*

Enter FITZURSE.

FITZURSE.

The Archbishop!

BECKET.

Ay! what wouldst thou, Reginald?

FITZURSE.

Why—why, my lord, I follow'd—follow'd one——

BECKET.

And then what follows? Let me follow thee.

FITZURSE.

It much imports me I should know her name.

BECKET.

What her?

FITZURSE.

The woman that I follow'd hither.

BECKET.

Perhaps it may import her all as much
Not to be known.

FITZURSE.

And what care I for that?
Come, come, my lord Archbishop; I saw that door
Close even now upon the woman.

BECKET.

Well?

FITZURSE (*making for the door*).

Nay, let me pass, my lord, for I must know.

BECKET.

Back, man!

FITZURSE.

Then tell me who and what she is.

BECKET.

Art thou so sure thou followedst anything?
Go home, and sleep thy wine off, for thine eyes
Glare stupid-wild with wine.

FITZURSE (*making to the door*).

I must and will.
I care not for thy new archbishoprick.

BECKET.

Back, man, I tell thee! What!
Shall I forget my new archbishoprick
And smite thee with my crozier on the skull?
'Fore God, I am a mightier man than thou.

FITZURSE.

It well befits thy new archbishoprick
To take the vagabond woman of the street
Into thine arms!

BECKET.

O drunken ribaldry!
Out, beast! out, bear!

FITZURSE.

I shall remember this.

BECKET.

Do, and begone! [*Exit* FITZURSE.

[*Going to the door, sees* DE TRACY.

Tracy, what dost thou here?

DE TRACY.

My lord, I follow'd Reginald Fitzurse.

BECKET.

Follow him out!

DE TRACY.

I shall remember this
Discourtesy. [*Exit.*

BECKET.

Do. These be those baron-brutes
That havock'd all the land in Stephen's day.
Rosamund de Clifford.

Re-enter ROSAMUND *and* HERBERT.

ROSAMUND.

Here am I.

BECKET.

Why here?
We gave thee to the charge of John of Salisbury,
To pass thee to thy secret bower to-morrow.
Wast thou not told to keep thyself from sight?

ROSAMUND.

Poor bird of passage! so I was; but, father,
They say that you are wise in winged things,
And know the ways of Nature. Bar the bird
From following the fled summer—a chink—he's out,
Gone! And there stole into the city a breath
Full of the meadows, and it minded me
Of the sweet woods of Clifford, and the walks
Where I could move at pleasure, and I thought
Lo! I must out or die.

BECKET.

Or out *and* die.
And what hast thou to do with this Fitzurse?

ROSAMUND.

Nothing. He sued my hand. I shook at him.
He found me once alone. Nay—nay—I cannot
Tell you: my father drove him and his friends,
De Tracy and De Brito, from our castle.
I was but fourteen and an April then.
I heard him swear revenge.

BECKET.

Why will you court it
By self-exposure? flutter out at night?
Make it so hard to save a moth from the fire?

ROSAMUND.

I have saved many of 'em. You catch 'em, so,
Softly, and fling them out to the free air.
They burn themselves *within*-door.

BECKET.

Our good John
Must speed you to your bower at once. The child
Is there already.

ROSAMUND.

Yes—the child—the child—
O rare, a whole long day of open field.

BECKET.

Ay, but you go disguised.

ROSAMUND,

O rare again!
We'll baffle them, I warrant. What shall it be?
I'll go as a nun.

BECKET.

No.

ROSAMUND.

What, not good enough
Even to play at nun?

BECKET.

Dan John with a nun,
That Map, and these new railers at the Church
May plaister his clean name with scurrilous rhymes!
No!
Go like a monk, cowling and clouding up
That fatal star, thy Beauty, from the squint
Of lust and glare of malice. Good night! good night!

ROSAMUND.

Father, I am so tender to all hardness!
Nay, father, first thy blessing.

BECKET.

Wedded?

ROSAMUND.

Father!

BECKET.

Well, well! I ask no more. Heaven bless thee! hence!

ROSAMUND.

O, holy father, when thou seest him next
Commend me to thy friend.

BECKET.

What friend?

ROSAMUND.

The King.

BECKET.

Herbert, take out a score of armed men
To guard this bird of passage to her cage;
And watch Fitzurse, and if he follow thee,
Make him thy prisoner. I am Chancellor yet.

[*Exeunt* HERBERT *and* ROSAMUND.

Poor soul! poor soul!
My friend, the King! . . . O thou Great Seal of England,
Given me by my dear friend the King of England—
We long have wrought together, thou and I—
Now must I send thee as a common friend
To tell the King, my friend, I am against him.
We are friends no more: he will say that, not I.
The worldly bond between us is dissolved,
Not yet the love: can I be under him
As Chancellor? as Archbishop over him?
Go therefore like a friend slighted by one
That hath climb'd up to nobler company.
Not slighted—all but moan'd for: thou must go.
I have not dishonour'd thee—I trust I have not;
Not mangled justice. May the hand that next
Inherits thee be but as true to thee
As mine hath been! O, my dear friend, the King!
O brother!—I may come to martyrdom.
I am martyr in myself already.—Herbert!

HERBERT (*re-entering*).

My lord, the town is quiet, and the moon
Divides the whole long street with light and shade.
No footfall—no Fitzurse. We have seen her home.

BECKET.

The hog hath tumbled himself into some corner,

Some ditch, to snore away his drunkenness
Into the sober headache,—Nature's moral
Against excess. Let the Great Seal be sent
Back to the King to-morrow.

HERBERT.

Must that be?
The King may rend the bearer limb from limb.
Think on it again.

BECKET.

Against the moral excess
No physical ache, but failure it may be
Of all we aim'd at. John of Salisbury
Hath often laid a cold hand on my heats,
And Herbert hath rebuked me even now.
I will be wise and wary, not the soldier
As Foliot swears it.—John, and out of breath!

Enter JOHN OF SALISBURY.

JOHN OF SALISBURY.

Thomas, thou wast not happy taking charge
Of this wild Rosamund to please the King,
Nor am I happy having charge of her—
The included Danaë has escaped again
Her tower, and her Acrisius—where to seek?
I have been about the city.

BECKET.

Thou wilt find her
Back in her lodging. Go with her—at once—
To-night—my men will guard you to the gates.
Be sweet to her, she has many enemies.
Send the Great Seal by daybreak. Both, good night!

SCENE II.—*Street in Northampton leading to the Castle.* ELEANOR'S RETAINERS *and* BECKET'S RETAINERS *fighting.* *Enter* ELEANOR *and* BECKET *from opposite streets.*

ELEANOR.

Peace, fools!

BECKET.

Peace, friends! what idle brawl is this?

RETAINER OF BECKET.

They said—her Grace's people—thou wast found—
Liars! I shame to quote 'em—caught, my lord,
With a wanton in thy lodging—Hell requite 'em!

RETAINER OF ELEANOR.

My liege, the Lord Fitzurse reported this
In passing to the Castle even now.

RETAINER OF BECKET.

And then they mock'd us and we fell upon 'em,
For we would live and die for thee, my lord,
However kings and queens may frown on thee.

BECKET TO HIS RETAINERS.

Go, go—no more of this!

ELEANOR TO HER RETAINERS.

Away!—(*Exeunt* RETAINERS) Fitzurse——

BECKET.

Nay, let him be.

ELEANOR.

No, no, my Lord Archbishop,
'Tis known you are midwinter to all women,
But often in your chancellorship you served
The follies of the King.

BECKET.

No, not these follies!

ELEANOR.

My lord, Fitzurse beheld her in your lodging.

BECKET.

Whom?

ELEANOR.

Well—you know—the minion, Rosamund.

BECKET.

He had good eyes!

ELEANOR.

Then hidden in the street
He watch'd her pass with John of Salisbury
And heard her cry 'Where is this bower of mine?'

BECKET.

Good ears too!

ELEANOR.

You are going to the Castle,
Will you subscribe the customs?

BECKET.

I leave that,
Knowing how much you reverence Holy Church,
My liege, to your conjecture.

ELEANOR.

I and mine—
And many a baron holds along with me—
Are not so much at feud with Holy Church

But we might take your side against the customs—
So that you grant me one slight favour.

BECKET.

What?

ELEANOR.

A sight of that same chart which Henry gave you
With the red line—'her bower.'

BECKET.

And to what end?

ELEANOR.

That Church must scorn herself whose fearful Priest
Sits winking at the license of a king,
Altho' we grant when kings are dangerous
The Church must play into the hands of kings;
Look! I would move this wanton from his sight
And take the Church's danger on myself.

BECKET.

For which she should be duly grateful.

ELEANOR.

True!

Tho' she that binds the bond, herself should see
That kings are faithful to their marriage vow.

BECKET.

Ay, Madam, and queens also.

ELEANOR.

And queens also!

What is your drift?

BECKET.

My drift is to the Castle,

Where I shall meet the Barons and my King. [*Exit.*

DE BROC, DE TRACY, DE BRITO, DE MORVILLE (*passing*).

ELEANOR.

To the Castle?

DE BROC.

Ay!

ELEANOR.

Stir up the King, the Lords!

Set all on fire against him!

DE BRITO.

Ay, good Madam! [*Exeunt.*

ELEANOR.

Fool! I will make thee hateful to thy King.

Churl! I will have thee frighted into France,

And I shall live to trample on thy grave.

SCENE III.—*The Hall in Northampton Castle.*

On one side of the stage the doors of an inner Council-chamber, half-open. At the bottom, the great doors of the Hall. ROGER ARCHBISHOP OF YORK, FOLIOT BISHOP OF LONDON, HILARY OF CHICHESTER, BISHOP OF HEREFORD, RICHARD DE HASTINGS (*Grand Prior of Templars*), PHILIP DE ELEEMOSYNA (*the Pope's Almoner*), *and others.* DE BROC, FITZURSE, DE BRITO, DE MORVILLE, DE TRACY, *and other* BARONS *assembled—a table before them.* JOHN OF OXFORD, *President of the Council.*

Enter BECKET *and* HERBERT OF BOSHAM.

BECKET.

Where is the King?

ROGER OF YORK.

Gone hawking on the Nene,
His heart so gall'd with thine ingratitude,
He will not see thy face till thou hast sign'd
These ancient laws and customs of the realm.
Thy sending back the Great Seal madden'd him,
He all but pluck'd the bearer's eyes away.
Take heed, lest he destroy thee utterly.

BECKET.

Then shalt thou step into my place and sign.

ROGER OF YORK.

Didst thou not promise Henry to obey
These ancient laws and customs of the realm?

BECKET.

Saving the honour of my order—ay.
Customs, traditions,—clouds that come and go;
The customs of the Church are Peter's rock.

ROGER OF YORK.

Saving thine order! But King Henry sware
That, saving his King's kingship, he would grant thee
The crown itself. Saving thine order, Thomas,
Is black and white at once, and comes to nought.
O bolster'd up with stubbornness and pride,
Wilt thou destroy the Church in fighting for it,
And bring us all to shame?

BECKET.

Roger of York,
When I and thou were youths in Theobald's house,
Twice did thy malice and thy calumnies

Exile me from the face of Theobald.
Now I am Canterbury and thou art York.

ROGER OF YORK.

And is not York the peer of Canterbury?
Did not great Gregory bid St. Austin here
Found two archbishopricks, London and York?

BECKET.

What came of that? The first archbishop fled,
And York lay barren for a hundred years.
Why, by this rule, Foliot may claim the pall
For London too.

FOLIOT.

And with good reason too,
For London had a temple and a priest
When Canterbury hardly bore a name.

BECKET.

The pagan temple of a pagan Rome!
The heathen priesthood of a heathen creed!
Thou goest beyond thyself in petulancy!
Who made thee London? Who, but Canterbury?

JOHN OF OXFORD.

Peace, peace, my lords! these customs are no longer

As Canterbury calls them, wandering clouds,
But by the King's command are written down,
And by the King's command I, John of Oxford,
The President of this Council, read them.

BECKET.

Read!

JOHN OF OXFORD (*reads.*)

All causes of advowsons and presentations, whether between laymen or clerics, shall be tried in the King's court.'

BECKET.

But that I cannot sign: for that would drag
The cleric before the civil judgment-seat,
And on a matter wholly spiritual.

JOHN OF OXFORD.

'If any cleric be accused of felony, the Church shall not protect him; but he shall answer to the summons of the King's court to be tried therein.'

BECKET.

And that I cannot sign.
Is not the Church the visible Lord on earth?
Shall hands that do create the Lord be bound
Behind the back like laymen-criminals?
The Lord be judged again by Pilate? No!

JOHN OF OXFORD.

'When a bishoprick falls vacant, the King, till another be appointed, shall receive the revenues thereof.'

BECKET.

And that I cannot sign. Is the King's treasury
A fit place for the monies of the Church,
That be the patrimony of the poor?

JOHN OF OXFORD.

'And when the vacancy is to be filled up, the King shall summon the chapter of that church to court, and the election shall be made in the Chapel Royal, with the consent of our lord the King, and by the advice of his Government.'

BECKET.

And that I cannot sign: for that would make
Our island-Church a schism from Christendom,
And weight down all free choice beneath the throne.

FOLIOT.

And was thine own election so canonical,
Good father?

BECKET.

If it were not, Gilbert Foliot,

I mean to cross the sea to France, and lay
My crozier in the Holy Father's hands,
And bid him re-create me, Gilbert Foliot.

FOLIOT.

Nay; by another of these customs thou
Wilt not be suffer'd so to cross the seas
Without the license of our lord the King.

BECKET.

That, too, I cannot sign.

DE BROC, DE BRITO, DE TRACY, FITZURSE, DE MORVILLE, *start up—a clash of swords.*

Sign and obey!

BECKET.

My lords, is this a combat or a council?
Are ye my masters, or my lord the King?
Ye make this clashing for no love o' the customs
Or constitutions, or whate'er ye call them,
But that there be among you those that hold
Lands reft from Canterbury.

DE BROC.

And mean to keep them,

In spite of thee!

LORDS (*shouting*).

Sign, and obey the crown!

BECKET.

The crown? Shall I do less for Canterbury
Than Henry for the crown? King Stephen gave
Many of the crown lands to those that helpt him;
So did Matilda, the King's mother. Mark,
When Henry came into his own again,
Then he took back not only Stephen's gifts,
But his own mother's, lest the crown should be
Shorn of ancestral splendour. This did Henry.
Shall I do less for mine own Canterbury?
And thou, De Broc, that holdest Saltwood Castle——

DE BROC.

And mean to hold it, or——

BECKET.

To have my life.

DE BROC.

The King is quick to anger; if thou anger him,
We wait but the King's word to strike thee dead.

BECKET.

Strike, and I die the death of martyrdom;
Strike, and ye set these customs by my death
Ringing their own death-knell thro' all the realm.

HERBERT.

And I can tell you, lords, ye are all as like
To lodge a fear in Thomas Becket's heart
As find a hare's form in a lion's cave.

JOHN OF OXFORD.

Ay, sheathe your swords, ye will displease the King.

DE BROC.

Why down then thou! but an he come to Saltwood,
By God's death, thou shalt stick him like a calf!
[*Sheathing his sword.*

HILARY.

O my good lord, I do entreat thee—sign.
Save the King's honour here before his barons.
He hath sworn that thou shouldst sign, and now but shuns
The semblance of defeat; I have heard him say
He means no more; so if thou sign, my lord,
That were but as the shadow of an assent.

BECKET.

'Twould seem too like the substance, if I sign'd.

PHILIP DE ELEEMOSYNA.

My lord, thine ear! I have the ear of the Pope.
As thou hast honour for the Pope our master,
Have pity on him, sorely prest upon
By the fierce Emperor and his Antipope.
Thou knowest he was forced to fly to France;
He pray'd me to pray thee to pacify
Thy King; for if thou go against thy King,
Then must he likewise go against thy King,
And then thy King might join the Antipope,
And that would shake the Papacy as it stands.
Besides, thy King swore to our cardinals
He meant no harm nor damage to the Church.
Smoothe thou his pride—thy signing is but form;
Nay, and should harm come of it, it is the Pope
Will be to blame—not thou. Over and over
He told me thou shouldst pacify the King,
Lest there be battle between Heaven and Earth,
And Earth should get the better—for the time.
Cannot the Pope absolve thee if thou sign?

BECKET.

Have I the orders of the Holy Father?

PHILIP DE ELEEMOSYNA.

Orders, my lord—why, no; for what am I?
The secret whisper of the Holy Father.
Thou, that hast been a statesman, couldst thou always
Blurt thy free mind to the air?

BECKET.

If Rome be feeble, then should I be firm.

PHILIP.

Take it not that way—balk not the Pope's will.
When he hath shaken off the Emperor,
He heads the Church against the King with thee.

RICHARD DE HASTINGS (*kneeling*).

Becket, I am the oldest of the Templars;
I knew thy father; he would be mine age
Had he lived now; think of me as thy father!
Behold thy father kneeling to thee, Becket.
Submit; I promise thee on my salvation
That thou wilt hear no more o' the customs.

BECKET.

What!
Hath Henry told thee? hast thou talk'd with him?

Another TEMPLAR (*kneeling*).

Father, I am the youngest of the Templars,
Look on me as I were thy bodily son,
For, like a son, I lift my hands to thee.

PHILIP.

Wilt thou hold out for ever, Thomas Becket?
Dost thou not hear?

BECKET (*signs*).

Why—there then—there—I sign,
And swear to obey the customs.

FOLIOT.

Is it thy will,
My lord Archbishop, that we too should sign?

BECKET.

O ay, by that canonical obedience
Thou still hast owed thy father, Gilbert Foliot.

FOLIOT.

Loyally and with good faith, my lord Archbishop?

BECKET.

O ay, with all that loyalty and good faith

Thou still hast shown thy primate, Gilbert Foliot.

[BECKET *draws apart with* HERBERT.

Herbert, Herbert, have I betray'd the Church?
I'll have the paper back—blot out my name.

HERBERT.

Too late, my lord: you see they are signing there.

BECKET.

False to myself—it is the will of God
To break me, prove me nothing of myself!
This Almoner hath tasted Henry's gold.
The cardinals have finger'd Henry's gold.
And Rome is venal ev'n to rottenness.
I see it, I see it.
I am no soldier, as he said—at least
No leader. Herbert, till I hear from the Pope
I will suspend myself from all my functions.
If fast and prayer, the lacerating scourge——

FOLIOT (*from the table*).

My lord Archbishop, thou hast yet to seal.

BECKET.

First, Foliot, let me see what I have sign'd.

[*Goes to the table.*

What, this! and this!—what! new and old together!

Seal? If a seraph shouted from the sun,
And bad me seal against the rights of the Church,
I would anathematise him. I will not seal.

[*Exit with* HERBERT.

Enter KING HENRY.

HENRY.

Where's Thomas? hath he sign'd? show me the papers!
Sign'd and not seal'd! How's that?

JOHN OF OXFORD.

He would not seal.
And when he sign'd, his face was stormy-red—
Shame, wrath, I know not what. He sat down there
And dropt it in his hands, and then a paleness,
Like the wan twilight after sunset, crept
Up even to the tonsure, and he groan'd,
'False to myself! It is the will of God!'

HENRY.

God's will be what it will, the man shall seal,
Or I will seal his doom. My burgher's son—
Nay, if I cannot break him as the prelate,
I'll crush him as the subject. Send for him back.

[*Sits on his throne.*

Barons and bishops of our realm of England,
After the nineteen winters of King Stephen—

A reign which was no reign, when none could sit
By his own hearth in peace ; when murder common
As nature's death, like Egypt's plague, had fill'd
All things with blood ; when every doorway blush'd,
Dash'd red with that unhallow'd passover ;
When every baron ground his blade in blood ;
The household dough was kneaded up with blood ;
The millwheel turn'd in blood ; the wholesome plow
Lay rusting in the furrow's yellow weeds,
Till famine dwarft the race—I came, your King !
Nor dwelt alone, like a soft lord of the East,
In mine own hall, and sucking thro' fools' ears
The flatteries of corruption—went abroad
Thro' all my counties, spied my people's ways ;
Yea, heard the churl against the baron—yea,
And did him justice ; sat in mine own courts
Judging my judges, that had found a King
Who ranged confusions, made the twilight day,
And struck a shape from out the vague, and law
From madness. And the event—our fallows till'd,
Much corn, repeopled towns, a realm again.
So far my course, albeit not glassy-smooth,
Had prosper'd in the main, but suddenly
Jarr'd on this rock. A cleric violated
The daughter of his host, and murder'd him.
Bishops—York, London, Chichester, Westminster—
Ye haled this tonsured devil into your courts ;

But since your canon will not let you take
Life for a life, ye but degraded him
Where I had hang'd him. What doth hard murder care
For degradation? and that made me muse,
Being bounden by my coronation oath
To do men justice. Look to it, your own selves!
Say that a cleric murder'd an archbishop,
What could ye do? Degrade, imprison him—
Not death for death.

JOHN OF OXFORD.

But I, my liege, could swear,
To death for death.

HENRY.

And, looking thro' my reign,
I found a hundred ghastly murders done
By men, the scum and offal of the Church;
Then, glancing thro' the story of this realm,
I came on certain wholesome usages,
Lost in desuetude, of my grandsire's day,
Good royal customs—had them written fair
For John of Oxford here to read to you.

JOHN OF OXFORD.

And I can easily swear to these as being
The King's will and God's will and justice; yet
I could but read a part to-day, because——

FITZURSE.

Because my lord of Canterbury——

DE TRACY.

Ay,
This lord of Canterbury——

DE BRITO.

As is his wont
Too much of late whene'er your royal rights
Are mooted in our councils—

FITZURSE.

—made an uproar.

HENRY.

And Becket had my bosom on all this;
If ever man by bonds of gratefulness—
I raised him from the puddle of the gutter,
I made him porcelain from the clay of the city—
Thought that I knew him, err'd thro' love of him,
Hoped, were he chosen archbishop, Church and Crown,
Two sisters gliding in an equal dance,
Two rivers gently flowing side by side—
But no!
The bird that moults sings the same song again,

The snake that sloughs comes out a snake again.
Snake—ay, but he that lookt a fangless one,
Issues a venomous adder.
For he, when having dofft the Chancellor's robe—
Flung the Great Seal of England in my face—
Claim'd some of our crown lands for Canterbury—
My comrade, boon companion, my co-reveller,
The master of his master, the King's king—
God's eyes! I had meant to make him all but king.
Chancellor-Archbishop, he might well have sway'd
All England under Henry, the young King,
When I was hence. What did the traitor say?
False to himself, but ten-fold false to me!
The will of God—why, then it is my will—
Is he coming?

MESSENGER (*entering*).

With a crowd of worshippers,
And holds his cross before him thro' the crowd,
As one that puts himself in sanctuary.

HENRY.

His cross!

ROGER OF YORK.

His cross! I'll front him, cross to cross.

[*Exit* ROGER OF YORK.

HENRY.

His cross! it is the traitor that imputes
Treachery to his King!
It is not safe for me to look upon him.
Away—with me!

[*Goes in with his* BARONS *to the Council Chamber, the door of which is left open.*

Enter BECKET, *holding his cross of silver before him. The* BISHOPS *come round him.*

HEREFORD.

The King will not abide thee with thy cross.
Permit me, my good lord, to bear it for thee,
Being thy chaplain.

BECKET.

No: it must protect me.

HERBERT.

As once he bore the standard of the Angles,
So now he bears the standard of the angels.

FOLIOT.

I am the Dean of the province: let me bear it.
Make not thy King a traitorous murderer.

BECKET.

Did not your barons draw their swords against me?

Enter ROGER OF YORK, *with his cross, advancing to* BECKET.

BECKET.

Wherefore dost thou presume to bear thy cross,
Against the solemn ordinance from Rome,
Out of thy province?

ROGER OF YORK.

Why dost thou presume,
Arm'd with thy cross, to come before the King?
If Canterbury bring his cross to court,
Let York bear his to mate with Canterbury.

FOLIOT (*seizing hold of* BECKET'S *cross*).

Nay, nay, my lord, thou must not brave the King.
Nay, let me have it. I will have it!

BECKET.

Away!

[*Flinging him off.*

FOLIOT.

He fasts, they say, this mitred Hercules!

He fast! is that an arm of fast? My lord,
Hadst thou not sign'd, I had gone along with thee;
But thou the shepherd hast betray'd the sheep,
And thou art perjured, and thou wilt not seal.
As Chancellor thou wast against the Church,
Now as Archbishop goest against the King;
For, like a fool, thou knowst no middle way.
Ay, ay! but art thou stronger than the King?

BECKET.

Strong—not in mine own self, but Heaven; true
To either function, holding it; and thou
Fast, scourge thyself, and mortify thy flesh,
Not spirit—thou remainest Gilbert Foliot,
A worldly follower of the worldly strong.
I, bearing this great ensign, make it clear
Under what Prince I fight.

FOLIOT.

My lord of York,
Let us go in to the Council, where our bishops
And our great lords will sit in judgment on him.

BECKET.

Sons sit in judgment on their father!—then
The spire of Holy Church may prick the graves—

Her crypt among the stars. Sign? seal? I promised
The King to obey these customs, not yet written,
Saving mine order; true too, that when written
I sign'd them—being a fool, as Foliot call'd me.
I hold not by my signing. Get ye hence,
Tell what I say to the King.

[*Exeunt* HEREFORD, FOLIOT, *and other* BISHOPS.

ROGER OF YORK.

The Church will hate thee.

[*Exit.*

BECKET.

Serve my best friend and make him my worst foe;
Fight for the Church, and set the Church against me!

HERBERT.

To be honest is to set all knaves against thee.
Ah! Thomas, excommunicate them all!

HEREFORD (*re-entering*).

I cannot brook the turmoil thou hast raised.
I would, my lord Thomas of Canterbury,
Thou wert plain Thomas and not Canterbury,
Or that thou wouldst deliver Canterbury
To our King's hands again, and be at peace.

HILARY (*re-entering*).

For hath not thine ambition set the Church
This day between the hammer and the anvil—
Fealty to the King, obedience to thyself?

HERBERT.

What say the bishops?

HILARY.

Some have pleaded for him,
But the King rages—most are with the King;
And some are reeds, that one time sway to the current,
And to the wind another. But we hold
Thou art forsworn; and no forsworn Archbishop
Shall helm the Church. We therefore place ourselves
Under the shield and safeguard of the Pope,
And cite thee to appear before the Pope,
And answer thine accusers. . . . Art thou deaf?

BECKET.

I hear you. [*Clash of arms.*

HILARY.

Dost thou hear those others?

BECKET.

Ay!

ROGER OF YORK (*re-entering*).

The King's 'God's eyes!' come now so thick and fast,
We fear that he may reave thee of thine own.
Come on, come on! it is not fit for us
To see the proud Archbishop mutilated.
Say that he blind thee and tear out thy tongue.

BECKET.

So be it. He begins at top with me:
They crucified St. Peter downward.

ROGER OF YORK.

Nay,
But for their sake who stagger betwixt thine
Appeal, and Henry's anger, yield.

BECKET.

Hence, Satan!

[*Exit* ROGER OF YORK.

FITZURSE (*re-entering*).

My lord, the King demands three hundred marks,
Due from his castles of Berkhamstead and Eye
When thou thereof wast warden.

BECKET.

Tell the King
I spent thrice that in fortifying his castles.

DE TRACY (*re-entering*).

My lord, the King demands seven hundred marks,
Lent at the siege of Thoulouse by the King.

BECKET.

I led seven hundred knights and fought his wars.

DE BRITO (*re-entering*).

My lord, the King demands five hundred marks,
Advanced thee at his instance by the Jews,
For which the King was bound security.

BECKET.

I thought it was a gift; I thought it was a gift.

Enter Lord LEICESTER (*followed by* BARONS *and* BISHOPS).

My lord, I come unwillingly. The King
Demands a strict account of all those revenues
From all the vacant sees and abbacies,
Which came into thy hands when Chancellor.

BECKET.

How much might that amount to, my lord Leicester?

LEICESTER.

Some thirty—forty thousand silver marks.

BECKET.

Are these your customs? O my good lord Leicester,
The King and I were brothers. All I had
I lavish'd for the glory of the King;
I shone from him, for him, his glory, his
Reflection: now the glory of the Church
Hath swallow'd up the glory of the King;
I am his no more, but hers. Grant me one day
To ponder these demands.

LEICESTER.

Hear first thy sentence!
The King and all his lords——

BECKET.

Son, first hear *me!*

LEICESTER.

Nay, nay, canst thou, that holdest thine estates
In fee and barony of the King, decline
The judgment of the King?

BECKET.

The King! I hold
Nothing in fee and barony of the King.
Whatever the Church owns—she holds it in
Free and perpetual alms, unsubject to
One earthly sceptre.

LEICESTER.

Nay, but hear thy judgment.
The King and all his barons——

BECKET.

Judgment! Barons!
Who but the bridegroom dares to judge the bride,
Or he the bridegroom may appoint? Not he
That is not of the house, but from the street
Stain'd with the mire thereof.
I had been so true
To Henry and mine office that the King
Would throne me in the great Archbishoprick:
And I, that knew mine own infirmity,
For the King's pleasure rather than God's cause
Took it upon me—err'd thro' love of him.
Now therefore God from me withdraws Himself,
And the King too.

What! forty thousand marks!
Why thou, the King, the Pope, the Saints, the world,
Know that when made Archbishop I was freed,
Before the Prince and chief Justiciary,
From every bond and debt and obligation
Incurr'd as Chancellor.

Hear me, son.

As gold
Outvalues dross, light darkness, Abel Cain,
The soul the body, and the Church the Throne,
I charge thee, upon pain of mine anathema,
That thou obey, not me, but God in me,
Rather than Henry. I refuse to stand
By the King's censure, make my cry to the Pope,
By whom I will be judged; refer myself,
The King, these customs, all the Church, to him,
And under his authority—I depart. [*Going.*

[LEICESTER *looks at him doubtingly.*

Am I a prisoner?

LEICESTER.

By St. Lazarus, no!
I am confounded by thee. Go in peace.

DE BROC.

In peace now—but after. Take that for earnest.

[*Flings a bone at him from the rushes.*

DE BRITO, FITZURSE, DE TRACY, *and others* (*flinging wisps of rushes*).

Ay, go in peace, caitiff, caitiff! And that too, perjured prelate—and that, turncoat shaveling! There, there, there! traitor, traitor, traitor!

BECKET.

Mannerless wolves! [*Turning and facing them.*

HERBERT.

Enough, my lord, enough!

BECKET.

Barons of England and of Normandy,
When what ye shake at doth but seem to fly,
True test of coward, ye follow with a yell.
But I that threw the mightiest knight of France,
Sir Engelram de Trie,——

HERBERT.

Enough, my lord.

BECKET.

More than enough. I play the fool again.

Enter HERALD.

HERALD.

The King commands you, upon pain of death,
That none should wrong or injure your Archbishop.

FOLIOT.

Deal gently with the young man Absalom.

[*Great doors of the Hall at the back open, and discover a crowd. They shout:*

Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord!

SCENE IV.—*Refectory of the Monastery at Northampton. A Banquet on the Tables.*

Enter BECKET. BECKET'S RETAINERS.

1ST RETAINER.

Do thou speak first.

2ND RETAINER.

Nay, thou! Nay, thou! Hast not thou drawn the short straw?

1ST RETAINER.

My lord Archbishop, wilt thou permit us——

BECKET.

To speak without stammering and like a free man? Ay.

1ST RETAINER.

My lord, permit us then to leave thy service.

BECKET.

When?

1ST RETAINER.

Now.

BECKET.

To-night?

1ST RETAINER.

To-night, my lord.

BECKET.

And why?

1ST RETAINER.

My lord, we leave thee not without tears.

BECKET.

Tears? Why not stay with me then?

1ST RETAINER.

My lord, we cannot yield thee an answer altogether to thy satisfaction.

BECKET.

I warrant you, or your own either. Shall I find you one? The King hath frowned upon me.

1ST RETAINER.

That is not altogether our answer, my lord.

BECKET.

No; yet all but all. Go, go! Ye have eaten of my dish and drunken of my cup for a dozen years.

1ST RETAINER.

And so we have. We mean thee no wrong. Wilt thou not say, 'God bless you,' ere we go?

BECKET.

God bless you all! God redden your pale blood! But mine is human-red; and when ye shall hear it is poured out upon earth, and see it mounting to Heaven, my God bless you, that seems sweet to you now, will blast and blind you like a curse.

1ST RETAINER.

We hope not, my lord. Our humblest thanks for your blessing. Farewell! [*Exeunt* RETAINERS.

BECKET.

Farewell, friends! farewell, swallows! I wrong the bird; she leaves only the nest she built, they leave the builder. Why? Am I to be murdered to-night?

[*Knocking at the door.*

ATTENDANT.

Here is a missive left at the gate by one from the castle.

BECKET.

Cornwall's hand or Leicester's: they write marvellously alike. [*Reading.*

'Fly at once to France, to King Louis of France: there be those about our King who would have thy blood.'

Was not my lord of Leicester bidden to our supper?

ATTENDANT.

Ay, my lord, and divers other earls and barons. But the hour is past, and our brother, Master Cook, he makes moan that all be a-getting cold.

BECKET.

And I make my moan along with him. Cold after

warm, winter after summer, and the golden leaves, these earls and barons, that clung to me, frosted off me by the first cold frown of the King. Cold, but look how the table steams, like a heathen altar; nay, like the altar at Jerusalem. Shall God's good gifts be wasted? None of them here! Call in the poor from the streets, and let them feast.

HERBERT.

That is the parable of our blessed Lord.

BECKET.

And why should not the parable of our blessed Lord be acted again? Call in the poor! The Church is ever at variance with the kings, and ever at one with the poor. I marked a group of lazars in the market-place—half-rag, half-sore—beggars, poor rogues (Heaven bless 'em) who never saw nor dreamed of such a banquet. I will amaze them. Call them in, I say. They shall henceforward be my earls and barons—our lords and masters in Christ Jesus.

[*Exit* HERBERT.

If the King hold his purpose, I am myself a beggar. Forty thousand marks! forty thousand devils —and these craven bishops!

A POOR MAN (*entering*) *with his dog.*

My lord Archbishop, may I come in with my poor friend, my dog? The King's verdurer caught him a-hunting in the forest, and cut off his paws. The dog followed his calling, my lord. I ha' carried him ever so many miles in my arms, and he licks my face and moans and cries out against the King.

BECKET.

Better thy dog than thee. The King's courts would use thee worse than thy dog—they are too bloody. Were the Church king, it would be otherwise. Poor beast! poor beast! set him down. I will bind up his wounds with my napkin. Give him a bone, give him a bone! Who misuses a dog would misuse a child—they cannot speak for themselves. Past help! his paws are past help. God help him!

Enter the BEGGARS (*and seat themselves at the Tables*). BECKET *and* HERBERT *wait upon them.*

1ST BEGGAR.

Swine, sheep, ox—here's a French supper. When thieves fall out, honest men——

2ND BEGGAR.

Is the Archbishop a thief who gives thee thy supper?

1ST BEGGAR.

Well, then, how does it go? When honest men fall out, thieves—no, it can't be that.

2ND BEGGAR.

Who stole the widow's one sitting hen o' Sunday, when she was at mass?

1ST BEGGAR.

Come, come! thou hadst thy share on her. Sitting hen! Our Lord Becket's our great sitting-hen cock, and we shouldn't ha' been sitting here if the barons and bishops hadn't been a-sitting on the Archbishop.

BECKET.

Ay, the princes sat in judgment against me, and the Lord hath prepared your table—*Sederunt principes, ederunt pauperes.*

A Voice.

Becket, beware of the knife!

BECKET.

Who spoke?

3RD BEGGAR.

Nobody, my lord. What's that, my lord?

BECKET.

Venison.

3RD BEGGAR.

Venison?

BECKET.

Buck; deer, as you call it.

3RD BEGGAR.

King's meat! By the Lord, won't we pray for your lordship!

BECKET.

And, my children, your prayers will do more for me in the day of peril that dawns darkly and drearily over the house of God—yea, and in the day of judgment also, than the swords of the craven sycophants would have done had they remained true to me whose bread they have partaken. I must leave you to your banquet. Feed, feast, and be merry. Herbert, for the sake of the Church itself, if not for my own, I must fly to France to-night. Come with me.

[*Exit with* HERBERT.

3RD BEGGAR.

Here—all of you—my lord's health (*they drink*). Well—if that isn't goodly wine——

1ST BEGGAR.

Then there isn't a goodly wench to serve him with it: they were fighting for her to-day in the street.

3RD BEGGAR.

Peace!

1ST BEGGAR.

The black sheep baaed to the miller's ewe-lamb,
The miller's away for to-night.
Black sheep, quoth she, too black a sin for me.
And what said the black sheep, my masters?
We can make a black sin white.

3RD BEGGAR.

Peace!

1ST BEGGAR.

'Ewe lamb, ewe lamb, I am here by the dam.'
But the miller came home that night,
And so dusted his back with the meal in his sack,
That he made the black sheep white.

3RD BEGGAR.

Be we not of the family? be we not a-supping with the head of the family? be we not in my lord's own refractory? Out from among us; thou art our black sheep.

Enter the four KNIGHTS.

FITZURSE.

Sheep, said he? And sheep without the shepherd, too. Where is my lord Archbishop? Thou the lustiest and lousiest of this Cain's brotherhood, answer.

3RD BEGGAR.

With Cain's answer, my lord. Am I his keeper? Thou shouldst call him Cain, not me.

FITZURSE.

So I do, for he would murder his brother the State.

3RD BEGGAR (*rising and advancing*).

No my lord; but because the Lord hath set his mark upon him that no man should murder him.

FITZURSE.

Where is he? where is he?

3RD BEGGAR.

With Cain belike, in the land of Nod, or in the land of France for aught I know.

FITZURSE.

France! Ha! De Morville, Tracy, Brito—fled is

he? Cross swords all of you! swear to follow him! Remember the Queen!

[*The four* KNIGHTS *cross their swords.*

DE BRITO.

They mock us; he is here.

[*All the* BEGGARS *rise and advance upon them.*

FITZURSE.

Come, you filthy knaves, let us pass.

3RD BEGGAR.

Nay, my lord, let *us* pass. We be a-going home after our supper in all humbleness, my lord; for the Archbishop loves humbleness, my lord; and though we be fifty to four, we daren't fight you with our crutches, my lord. There now, if thou hast not laid hands upon me! and my fellows know that I am all one scale like a fish. I pray God I haven't given thee my leprosy, my lord.

[FITZURSE *shrinks from him and another presses upon* DE BRITO.

DE BRITO.

Away, dog!

4TH BEGGAR.

And I was bit by a mad dog o' Friday, an' I be half

dog already by this token, that tho' I can drink wine I cannot bide water, my lord; and I want to bite, I want to bite, and they do say the very breath catches.

DE BRITO.

Insolent clown. Shall I smite him with the edge of the sword?

DE MORVILLE.

No, nor with the flat of it either. Smite the shepherd and the sheep are scattered. Smite the sheep and the shepherd will excommunicate thee.

DE BRITO.

Yet my fingers itch to beat him into nothing.

5TH BEGGAR.

So do mine, my lord. I was born with it, and sulphur won't bring it out o' me. But for all that the Archbishop washed my feet o' Tuesday. He likes it, my lord.

6TH BEGGAR.

And see here, my lord, this rag fro' the gangrene i' my leg. It's humbling—it smells o' human natur'. Wilt thou smell it, my lord? for the Archbishop likes the smell on it, my lord; for I be his lord and master i' Christ, my lord.

DE MORVILLE.

Faugh! we shall all be poisoned. Let us go.

[*They draw back,* BEGGARS *following.*

7TH BEGGAR.

My lord, I ha' three sisters a-dying at home o' the sweating sickness. They be dead while I be a-supping.

8TH BEGGAR.

And I ha' nine darters i' the spital that be dead ten times o'er i' one day wi' the putrid fever; and I bring the taint on it along wi' me, for the Archbishop likes it, my lord.

[*Pressing upon the* KNIGHTS *till they disappear thro' the door.*

3RD BEGGAR.

Crutches, and itches, and leprosies, and ulcers, and gangrenes, and running sores, praise ye the Lord, for to-night ye have saved our Archbishop!

1ST BEGGAR.

I'll go back again. I hain't half done yet.

HERBERT OF BOSHAM (*entering*).

My friends, the Archbishop bids you good-night.

He hath retired to rest, and being in great jeopardy of his life, he hath made his bed between the altars, from whence he sends me to bid you this night pray for him who hath fed you in the wilderness.

3RD BEGGAR.

So we will—so we will, I warrant thee. Becket shall be king, and the Holy Father shall be king, and the world shall live by the King's venison and the bread o' the Lord, and there shall be no more poor for ever. Hurrah! Vive le Roy! That's the English of it.

ACT II.

SCENE I.—ROSAMUND'S *Bower. A Garden of Flowers. In the midst a bank of wild-flowers with a bench before it.*

Voices heard singing among the trees

Duet.

1. Is it the wind of the dawn that I hear in the pine overhead?
2. No; but the voice of the deep as it hollows the cliffs of the land.
1. Is there a voice coming up with the voice of the deep from the strand,
   One coming up with a song in the flush of the glimmering red?
2. Love that is born of the deep coming up with the sun from the sea.
1. Love that can shape or can shatter a life till the life shall have fled?
2. Nay, let us welcome him, Love that can lift up a life from the dead.

1. Keep him away from the lone little isle. Let us be, let us be.
2. Nay, let him make it his own, let him reign in it—he, it is he,
   Love that is born of the deep coming up with the sun from the sea.

Enter HENRY *and* ROSAMUND.

ROSAMUND.

Be friends with him again—I do beseech thee.

HENRY.

With Becket? I have but one hour with thee—
Sceptre and crozier clashing, and the mitre
Grappling the crown—and when I flee from this
For a gasp of freer air, a breathing-while
To rest upon thy bosom and forget him—
Why thou, my bird, thou pipest Becket, Becket—
Yea, thou my golden dream of Love's own bower,
Must be the nightmare breaking on my peace
With 'Becket.'

ROSAMUND.

O my life's life, not to smile
Is all but death to me. My sun, no cloud!
Let there not be one frown in this one hour.
Out of the many thine, let this be mine!

Look rather thou all-royal as when first
I met thee.

HENRY.

Where was that?

ROSAMUND.

Forgetting that
Forgets me too.

HENRY.

Nay, I remember it well.
There on the moors.

ROSAMUND.

And in a narrow path.
A plover flew before thee. Then I saw
Thy high black steed among the flaming furze,
Like sudden night in the main glare of day.
And from that height something was said to me
I knew not what.

HENRY.

I ask'd the way.

ROSAMUND.

I think so.
So I lost mine.

HENRY.

Thou wast too shamed to answer.

ROSAMUND.

Too scared—so young !

HENRY.

The rosebud of my rose !—
Well, well, no more of *him*—I have sent his folk,
His kin, all his belongings, overseas ;
Age, orphans, and babe-breasting mothers—all
By hundreds to him—there to beg, starve, die—
So that the fool King Louis feed them not.
The man shall feel that I can strike him yet.

ROSAMUND.

Babes, orphans, mothers ! is that royal, Sire?

HENRY.

And I have been as royal with the Church.
He shelter'd in the Abbey of Pontigny.
There wore his time studying the canon law
To work it against me. But since he cursed
My friends at Veselay, I have let them know,
That if they keep him longer as their guest,
I scatter all their cowls to all the hells.

ROSAMUND.

And is that altogether royal?

HENRY.

Traitress!

ROSAMUND.

A faithful traitress to thy royal fame.

HENRY.

Fame! what care I for fame? Spite, ignorance, envy,
Yea, honesty too, paint her what way they will.
Fame of to-day is infamy to-morrow;
Infamy of to-day is fame to-morrow;
And round and round again. What matters? Royal—
I mean to leave the royalty of my crown
Unlessen'd to mine heirs.

ROSAMUND.

Still—thy fame too:
I say that should be royal.

HENRY.

And I say,
I care not for thy saying.

ROSAMUND.

And I say,
I care not for *thy* saying. A greater King
Than thou art, Love, who cares not for the word,
Makes 'care not'—care. There have I spoken true?

HENRY.

Care dwell with me for ever, when I cease
To care for thee as ever!

ROSAMUND.

No need! no need! . . .
There is a bench. Come, wilt thou sit? . . . My bank
Of wild-flowers [*he sits*]. At thy feet!
[*She sits at his feet.*

HENRY.

I bad them clear
A royal pleasaunce for thee, in the wood,
Not leave these countryfolk at court.

ROSAMUND.

I brought them
In from the wood, and set them here. I love them
More than the garden flowers, that seem at most
Sweet guests, or foreign cousins, not half speaking
The language of the land. I love *them* too,
Yes. But, my liege, I am sure, of all the roses—
Shame fall on those who gave it a dog's name—
This wild one (*picking a briar-rose*)—nay, I shall not prick myself—
Is sweetest. Do but smell!

HENRY.

Thou rose of the world!
Thou rose of all the roses!
[*Muttering.*
I am not worthy of her—this beast-body
That God has plunged my soul in—I, that taking
The Fiend's advantage of a throne, so long
Have wander'd among women,—a foul stream
Thro' fever-breeding levels,—at her side,
Among these happy dales, run clearer, drop
The mud I carried, like yon brook, and glass
The faithful face of heaven—
[*Looking at her, and unconsciously aloud,*
—thine! thine!

ROSAMUND.

I know it.

HENRY (*muttering*).

Not hers! We have but one bond, her hate of Becket.

ROSAMUND (*half hearing*).

Nay! nay! what art thou muttering? *I* hate Becket?

HENRY (*muttering*).

A sane and natural loathing for a soul
Purer, and truer and nobler than herself;
And mine a bitterer illegitimate hate,
A bastard hate born of a former love.

ROSAMUND.

My fault to name him! O let the hand of one
To whom thy voice is all her music, stay it
But for a breath. [*Puts her hand before his lips.*
Speak only of thy love.
Why there—like some loud beggar at thy gate—
The happy boldness of this hand hath won it
Love's alms, thy kiss (*looking at her hand*)—Sacred!
I'll kiss it too. [*Kissing it.*
There! wherefore dost thou so peruse it? Nay,
There may be crosses in my line of life.

HENRY.

Not half *her* hand—no hand to mate with *her*,
If it should come to that.

ROSAMUND.

With her? with whom?

HENRY.

Life on the hand is naked gipsy-stuff;
Life on the face, the brows—clear innocence!
Vein'd marble—not a furrow yet—and hers
[*Muttering.*
Crost and recrost, a venomous spider's web——

ROSAMUND (*springing up*).

Out of the cloud, my Sun—out of the eclipse
Narrowing my golden hour!

HENRY.

O Rosamund,
I would be true—would tell thee all—and something
I had to say—I love thee none the less—
Which will so vex thee.

ROSAMUND.

Something against *me?*

HENRY.

No, no, against myself.

ROSAMUND.

I will not hear it.
Come, come, mine hour! I bargain for mine hour.
I'll call thee little Geoffrey.

HENRY.

Call him!

ROSAMUND.

Geoffrey!

[*Enter* GEOFFREY.

HENRY.

How the boy grows!

ROSAMUND.

Ay, and his brows are thine;
The mouth is only Clifford, my dear father.

GEOFFREY.

My liege, what hast thou brought me?

HENRY.

Venal imp!
What say'st thou to the Chancellorship of England?

GEOFFREY.

O yes, my liege.

HENRY.

'O yes, my liege!' He speaks
As if it were a cake of gingerbread.
Dost thou know, my boy, what it is to be Chancellor of England?

GEOFFREY.

Something good, or thou wouldst not give it me.

HENRY.

It is, my boy, to side with the King when Chan-

cellor, and then to be made Archbishop and go against the King who made him, and turn the world upside down.

GEOFFREY.

I won't have it then. Nay, but give it me, and I promise thee not to turn the world upside down.

HENRY (*giving him a ball*).

Here is a ball, my boy, thy world, to turn anyway and play with as thou wilt—which is more than I can do with mine. Go try it, play. [*Exit* GEOFFREY.

A pretty lusty boy.

ROSAMUND.

So like to thee;

Like to be liker.

HENRY.

Not in my chin, I hope!

That threatens double.

ROSAMUND.

Thou art manlike perfect.

HENRY.

Ay, ay, no doubt; and were I humpt behind,

Thou'dst say as much—the goodly way of women

Who love, for which I love them. May God grant
No ill befall or him or thee when I
Am gone.

ROSAMUND.

Is *he* thy enemy?

HENRY.

He? who? ay!

ROSAMUND.

Thine enemy knows the secret of my bower.

HENRY.

And I could tear him asunder with wild horses
Before he would betray it. Nay—no fear!
More like is he to excommunicate me.

ROSAMUND.

And I would creep, crawl over knife-edge flint
Barefoot, a hundred leagues, to stay his hand
Before he flash'd the bolt.

HENRY.

And when he flash'd it
Shrink from me, like a daughter of the Church.

ROSAMUND.

Ay, but he will not.

HENRY.

Ay! but if he did?

ROSAMUND.

O then! O then! I almost fear to say
That my poor heretic heart would excommunicate
His excommunication, clinging to thee
Closer than ever.

HENRY (*raising* ROSAMUND *and kissing her*).

My brave-hearted Rose!
Hath he ever been to see thee?

ROSAMUND.

Here? not he.
And it is so lonely here—no confessor.

HENRY.

Thou shalt confess all thy sweet sins to **me.**

ROSAMUND.

Besides, we came away in such a heat,
I brought not ev'n my crucifix.

HENRY.

Take this.

[*Giving her the Crucifix which* ELEANOR *gave him.*

ROSAMUND.

O beautiful! May I have it as mine, till mine
Be mine again?

HENRY (*throwing it round her neck*).

Thine—as I am—till death!

ROSAMUND.

Death? no! I'll have it with me in my shroud,
And wake with it, and show it to all the Saints.

HENRY.

Nay—I must go; but when thou layest thy lip
To this, remembering One who died for thee,
Remember also one who lives for thee
Out there in France; for I must hence to brave
The Pope, King Louis, and this turbulent priest.

ROSAMUND (*kneeling*).

O by thy love for me, all mine for thee,
Fling not thy soul into the flames of hell:
I kneel to thee—be friends with him again.

HENRY.

Look, look! if little Geoffrey have not tost
His ball into the brook! makes after it too
To find it. Why, the child will drown himself.

ROSAMUND.

Geoffrey! Geoffrey! [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—*Montmirail.* '*The Meeting of the Kings.*' JOHN OF OXFORD *and* HENRY. *Crowd in the distance.*

JOHN OF OXFORD.

You have not crown'd young Henry yet, my liege?

HENRY.

Crown'd! by God's eyes, we will not have him crown'd.
I spoke of late to the boy, he answer'd me,
As if he wore the crown already—No,
We will not have him crown'd.
'Tis true what Becket told me, that the mother
Would make him play his kingship against mine.

JOHN OF OXFORD.

Not have him crown'd?

HENRY.

Not now—not yet! and Becket—
Becket should crown him were he crown'd at all:
But, since we would be lord of our own manor,

This Canterbury, like a wounded deer,
Has fled our presence and our feeding-grounds.

JOHN OF OXFORD.

Cannot a smooth tongue lick him whole again
To serve your will?

HENRY.

He hates my will, not me.

JOHN OF OXFORD.

There's York, my liege.

HENRY.

But England scarce would hold
Young Henry king, if only crown'd by York,
And that would stilt up York to twice himself.
There is a movement yonder in the crowd—
See if our pious—what shall I call him, John?—
Husband-in-law, our smooth-shorn suzerain,
Be yet within the field.

JOHN OF OXFORD.

I will. [*Exit.*

HENRY.

Ay! Ay!
Mince and go back! his politic Holiness

Hath all but climb'd the Roman perch again,
And we shall hear him presently with clapt wing
Crow over Barbarossa—at last tongue-free
To blast my realms with excommunication
And interdict. I must patch up a peace—
A piece in this long-tugged-at, threadbare-worn
Quarrel of Crown and Church—to rend again.
His Holiness cannot steer straight thro' shoals,
Nor I. The citizen's heir hath conquer'd me
For the moment. So we make our peace with him.

[*Enter* LOUIS.

Brother of France, what shall be done with Becket?

LOUIS.

The holy Thomas! Brother, you have traffick'd
Between the Emperor and the Pope, between
The Pope and Antipope—a perilous game
For men to play with God.

HENRY.

Ay, ay, good brother,
They call you the Monk-King.

LOUIS.

Who calls me? she
That was my wife, now yours? You have her Duchy,
The point you aim'd at, and pray God she prove

True wife to you. You have had the better of us
In secular matters.

HENRY.

Come, confess, good brother,
You did your best or worst to keep her Duchy.
Only the golden Leopard printed in it
Such hold-fast claws that you perforce again
Shrank into France. Tut, tut! did we convene
This conference but to babble of our wives?
They are plagues enough in-door.

LOUIS.

We fought in the East,
And felt the sun of Antioch scald our mail,
And push'd our lances into Saracen hearts.
We never hounded on the State at home
To spoil the Church.

HENRY.

How should you see this rightly?

LOUIS.

Well, well, no more! I am proud of my 'Monk-King,'
Whoever named me; and, brother, Holy Church
May rock, but will not wreck, nor our Archbishop

Stagger on the slope decks for any rough sea
Blown by the breath of kings. We do forgive you
For aught you wrought against us.

[HENRY *holds up his hand.*

Nay, I pray you,
Do not defend yourself. You will do much
To rake out all old dying heats, if you,
At my requesting, will but look into
The wrongs you did him, and restore his kin,
Reseat him on his throne of Canterbury,
Be, both, the friends you were.

HENRY.

The friends we were!
Co-mates we were, and had our sport together,
Co-kings we were, and made the laws together.
The world had never seen the like before.
You are too cold to know the fashion of it.
Well, well, we will be gentle with him, gracious—
Most gracious.

Enter BECKET, *after him*, JOHN OF OXFORD, ROGER OF YORK, GILBERT FOLIOT, DE BROC, FITZURSE, *etc.*

Only that the rift he made
May close between us, here I am wholly king,
The word should come from him.

BECKET (*kneeling*).

Then, my dear liege,
I here deliver all this controversy
Into your royal hands.

HENRY.

Ah, Thomas, Thomas,
Thou art thyself again, Thomas again.

BECKET (*rising*).

Saving God's honour!

HENRY.

Out upon thee, man!
Saving the Devil's honour, his yes and no.
Knights, bishops, earls, this London spawn—by Mahound,
I had sooner have been born a Mussulman—
Less clashing with their priests—
I am half-way down the slope—will no man stay me?
I dash myself to pieces—I stay myself—
Puff—it is gone. You, Master Becket, you
That owe to me your power over me—
Nay, nay—
Brother of France, you have taken, cherish'd him
Who thief-like fled from his own church by night,
No man pursuing. I would have had him back.

Take heed he do not turn and rend you too:
For whatsoever may displease him—that
Is clean against God's honour—a shift, a trick
Whereby to challenge, face me out of all
My regal rights. Yet, yet—that none may dream
I go against God's honour—ay, or himself
In any reason, choose
A hundred of the wisest heads from England,
A hundred, too, from Normandy and Anjou:
Let these decide on what was customary
In olden days, and all the Church of France
Decide on their decision, I am content.
More, what the mightiest and the holiest
Of all his predecessors may have done
Ev'n to the least and meanest of my own,
Let him do the same to me—I am content.

LOUIS.

Ay, ay! the King humbles himself enough.

BECKET.

(*Aside.*) Words! he will wriggle out of them like an eel
When the time serves. (*Aloud.*) My lieges and my lords,
The thanks of Holy Church are due to those
That went before us for their work, which we
Inheriting reap an easier harvest. Yet——

LOUIS.

My lord, will you be greater than the Saints,
More than St. Peter? whom——what is it you doubt?
Behold your peace at hand.

BECKET.

I say that those
Who went before us did not wholly clear
The deadly growths of earth, which Hell's own heat
So dwelt on that they rose and darken'd Heaven.
Yet they did much. Would God they had torn up all
By the hard root, which shoots again; our trial
Had so been less; but, seeing they were men
Defective or excessive, must we follow
All that they overdid or underdid?
Nay, if they were defective as St. Peter
Denying Christ, who yet defied the tyrant,
We hold by his defiance, not his defect.
O good son Louis, do not counsel me,
No, to suppress God's honour for the sake
Of any king that breathes. No, God forbid!

HENRY.

No! God forbid! and turn me Mussulman!
No God but one, and Mahound is his prophet.
But for your Christian, look you, you shall have

None other God but me—me, Thomas, son
Of Gilbert Becket, London merchant. Out!
I hear no more. [*Exit.*

LOUIS.

Our brother's anger puts him,
Poor man, beside himself—not wise. My lord,
We have claspt your cause, believing that our brother
Had wrong'd you; but this day he proffer'd peace.
You will have war; and tho' we grant the Church
King over this world's kings, yet, my good lord,
We that are kings are something in this world,
And so we pray you, draw yourself from under
The wings of France. We shelter you no more.
[*Exit.*

JOHN OF OXFORD.

I am glad that France hath scouted him at last:
I told the Pope what manner of man he was. [*Exit.*

ROGER OF YORK.

Yea, since he flouts the will of either realm,
Let either cast him away like a dead dog! [*Exit.*

FOLIOT.

Yea, let a stranger spoil his heritage,
And let another take his bishoprick! [*Exit.*

DE BROC.

Our castle, my lord, belongs to Canterbury.
I pray you come and take it. [*Exit.*

FITZURSE.

When you will. [*Exit.*

BECKET.

Cursed be John of Oxford, Roger of York,
And Gilbert Foliot! cursed those De Brocs
That hold our Saltwood Castle from our see!
Cursed Fitzurse, and all the rest of them
That sow this hate between my lord and me!

Voices from the Crowd.

Blessed be the Lord Archbishop, who hath withstood two Kings to their faces for the honour of God.

BECKET.

Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, praise!
I thank you, sons; when kings but hold by crowns,
The crowd that hungers for a crown in Heaven
Is my true king.

HERBERT.

Thy true King bad thee be
A fisher of men; thou hast them in thy net.

BECKET.

I am too like the King here; both of us
Too headlong for our office. Better have been
A fisherman at Bosham, my good Herbert,
Thy birthplace—the sea-creek—the petty rill
That falls into it—the green field—the gray church—
The simple lobster-basket, and the mesh—
The more or less of daily labour done—
The pretty gaping bills in the home-nest
Piping for bread—the daily want supplied—
The daily pleasure to supply it.

HERBERT.

Ah, Thomas,
You had not borne it, no, not for a day.

BECKET.

Well, maybe, no.

HERBERT.

But bear with Walter Map,
For here he comes to comment on the time.

Enter WALTER MAP.

WALTER MAP.

Pity, my lord, that you have quenched the warmth

of France toward you, tho' His Holiness, after much smouldering and smoking, be kindled again upon your quarter.

BECKET.

Ay, if he do not end in smoke again.

WALTER MAP.

My lord, the fire, when first kindled, said to the smoke, 'Go up, my son, straight to Heaven.' And the smoke said, 'I go;' but anon the North-east took and turned him South-west, then the South-west turned him North-east, and so of the other winds; but it was in him to go up straight if the time had been quieter. Your lordship affects the unwavering perpendicular; but His Holiness, pushed one way by the Empire and another by England, if he move at all, Heaven stay him, is fain to diagonalise.

HERBERT.

Diagonalise! thou art a word-monger!
Our Thomas never will diagonalise.
Thou art a jester and a verse-maker.
Diagonalise!

WALTER MAP.

Is the world any the worse for my verses if the Latin rhymes be rolled out from a full mouth? or

any harm done to the people if my jest be in defence of the Truth?

BECKET.

Ay, if the jest be so done that the people
Delight to wallow in the grossness of it,
Till Truth herself be shamed of her defender.
Non defensoribus istis, Walter Map.

WALTER MAP.

Is that my case? so if the city be sick, and I cannot call the kennel sweet, your lordship would suspend me from verse-writing, as you suspended yourself after sub-writing to the customs.

BECKET.

I pray God pardon mine infirmity.

WALTER MAP.

Nay, my lord, take heart; for tho' you suspended yourself, the Pope let you down again; and tho' you suspend Foliot or another, the Pope will not leave them in suspense, for the Pope himself is always in suspense, like Mahound's coffin hung between heaven and earth—always in suspense, like the scales, till the weight of Germany or the gold of England brings one of them down to the dust—always in suspense,

like the tail of the horologe—to and fro—tick-tack —we make the time, we keep the time, ay, and we serve the time; for I have heard say that if you boxed the Pope's ears with a purse, you might stagger him, but he would pocket the purse. No saying of mine —Jocelyn of Salisbury. But the King hath bought half the College of Redhats. He warmed to you to-day, and you have chilled him again. Yet you both love God. Agree with him quickly again, even for the sake of the Church. My one grain of good counsel which you will not swallow. I hate a split between old friendship as I hate the dirty gap in the face of a Cistercian monk, that will swallow anything. Farewell. [*Exit.*

BECKET.

Map scoffs at Rome. I all but hold with Map.
Save for myself no Rome were left in England,
All had been his. Why should this Rome, this Rome,
Still choose Barabbas rather than the Christ,
Absolve the left-hand thief and damn the right?
Take fees of tyranny, wink at sacrilege,
Which even Peter had not dared? condemn
The blameless exile?—

HERBERT.

Thee, thou holy Thomas!
I would that thou hadst been the Holy Father.

BECKET.

I would have done my most to keep Rome holy,
I would have made Rome know she still is Rome—
Who stands aghast at her eternal self
And shakes at mortal kings—her vacillation,
Avarice, craft—O God, how many an innocent
Has left his bones upon the way to Rome
Unwept, uncared for. Yea—on mine own self
The King had had no power except for Rome.
'Tis not the King who is guilty of mine exile,
But Rome, Rome, Rome!

HERBERT.

My lord, I see this Louis
Returning, ah! to drive thee from his realm.

BECKET.

He said as much before. Thou art no prophet,
Nor yet a prophet's son.

HERBERT.

Whatever he say,
Deny not thou God's honour for a king.
The King looks troubled.

Re-enter KING LOUIS.

LOUIS.

My dear lord Archbishop,
I learn but now that those poor Poitevins,
That in thy cause were stirr'd against King Henry,
Have been, despite his kingly promise given
To our own self of pardon, evilly used
And put to pain. I have lost all trust in him.
The Church alone hath eyes—and now I see
That I was blind—suffer the phrase—surrendering
God's honour to the pleasure of a man.
Forgive me and absolve me, holy father. [*Kneels.*

BECKET.

Son, I absolve thee in the name of God.

LOUIS (*rising*).

Return to Sens, where we will care for you.
The wine and wealth of all our France are yours;
Rest in our realm, and be at peace with all. [*Exeunt.*

Voices from the Crowd.

Long live the good King Louis! God bless the great Archbishop!

Re-enter HENRY *and* JOHN OF OXFORD.

HENRY (*looking after* KING LOUIS *and* BECKET).

Ay, there they go—both backs are turn'd to me—
Why then I strike into my former path
For England, crown young Henry there, and make
Our waning Eleanor all but love me!
John,
Thou hast served me heretofore with Rome—and well.
They call thee John the Swearer.

JOHN OF OXFORD.

For this reason,
That, being ever duteous to the King,
I evermore have sworn upon his side,
And ever mean to do it.

HENRY (*claps him on the shoulder*).

Honest John!
To Rome again! the storm begins again.
Spare not thy tongue! be lavish with our coins,
Threaten our junction with the Emperor—flatter
And fright the Pope—bribe all the Cardinals—leave
Lateran and Vatican in one dust of gold—
Swear and unswear, state and misstate thy best!
I go to have young Henry crown'd by York.

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*The Bower.*

HENRY *and* ROSAMUND.

HENRY.

All that you say is just. I cannot answer it
Till better times, when I shall put away——

ROSAMUND.

What will you put away?

HENRY.

That which you ask me
Till better times. Let it content you now
There is no woman that I love so well.

ROSAMUND.

No woman but should be content with that—

HENRY.

And one fair child to fondle!

ROSAMUND.

O yes, the child
We waited for so long—heaven's gift at last—
And how you doated on him then! To-day
I almost fear'd your kiss was colder—yes—
But then the child *is* such a child. What chance
That he should ever spread into the man
Here in our silence? I have done my best.
I am not learn'd.

HENRY.

I am the King, his father,
And I will look to it. Is our secret ours?
Have you had any alarm? no stranger?

ROSAMUND.

No.
The warder of the bower hath given himself
Of late to wine. I sometimes think he sleeps
When he should watch; and yet what fear? the people
Believe the wood enchanted. No one comes,
Nor foe nor friend; his fond excess of wine
Springs from the loneliness of my poor bower,
Which weighs even on me.

HENRY.

Yet these tree-towers,
Their long bird-echoing minster-aisles,—the voice
Of the perpetual brook, these golden slopes
Of Solomon-shaming flowers—that was your saying,
All pleased you so at first.

ROSAMUND.

Not now so much.
My Anjou bower was scarce as beautiful.
But you were oftener there. I have none but you.
The brook's voice is not yours, and no flower, not
The sun himself, should he be changed to one,
Could shine away the darkness of that gap
Left by the lack of love.

HENRY.

The lack of love!

ROSAMUND.

Of one we love. Nay, I would not be bold,
Yet hoped ere this you might——

[*Looks earnestly at him.*

HENRY.

Anything further?

ROSAMUND.

Only my best bower-maiden died of late,
And that old priest whom John of Salisbury trusted
Hath sent another.

HENRY.

Secret?

ROSAMUND.

I but ask'd her
One question, and she primm'd her mouth and put
Her hands together—thus—and said, God help her,
That she was sworn to silence.

HENRY.

What did you ask her?

ROSAMUND.

Some daily something-nothing.

HENRY.

Secret, then?

ROSAMUND.

I do not love her. Must you go, my liege,
So suddenly?

HENRY.

I came to England suddenly,
And on a great occasion sure to wake
As great a wrath in Becket——

ROSAMUND.

Always Becket!
He always comes between us.

HENRY.

—And to meet it
I needs must leave as suddenly. It is raining.
Put on your hood and see me to the bounds.

[*Exeunt.*

MARGERY (*singing behind scene*).

Babble in bower
Under the rose!
Bee mustn't buzz,
Whoop—but he knows.

Kiss me, little one,
Nobody near!
Grasshopper, grasshopper,
Whoop—you can hear.

Kiss in the bower,
Tit on the tree!
Bird mustn't tell,
Whoop—he can see.

Enter MARGERY.

I ha' been but a week here and I ha' seen what I ha' seen, for to be sure it's no more than a week since our old Father Philip that has confessed our mother for twenty years, and she was hard put to it, and to speak truth, nigh at the end of our last crust, and that mouldy, and she cried out on him to put me forth in the world and to make me a woman of the world, and to win my own bread, whereupon he asked our mother if I could keep a quiet tongue i' my head, and not speak till I was spoke to, and I answered for myself that I never spoke more than was needed, and he told me he would advance me to the service of a great lady, and took me ever so far away, and gave me a great pat o' the cheek for a pretty wench, and said it was a pity to blindfold such eyes as mine, and such to be sure they be, but he blinded 'em for all that, and so brought me no-hows as I may say, and the more shame to him after his promise, into a garden and not into the world, and bad me whatever I saw not to speak one word, an' it 'ud be well for me in the end, for there were great ones who would look after me, and to be sure I ha' seen great ones to-day—and then not to speak one word, for that's the rule o' the garden, tho' to be sure if I had been Eve i' the garden I shouldn't ha' minded the apple, for what's an apple,

you know, save to a child, and I'm no child, but more a woman o' the world than my lady here, and I ha' seen what I ha' seen—tho' to be sure if I hadn't minded it we should all on us ha' had to go, bless the Saints, wi' bare backs, but the backs 'ud ha' countenanced one another, and belike it 'ud ha' been always summer, and anyhow I am as well-shaped as my lady here, and I ha' seen what I ha' seen, and what's the good of my talking to myself, for here comes my lady (*enter* ROSAMUND), and, my lady, tho' I shouldn't speak one word, I wish you joy o' the King's brother.

ROSAMUND.

What is it you mean?

MARGERY.

I mean your goodman, your husband, my lady, for I saw your ladyship a-parting wi' him even now i' the coppice, when I was a-getting o' bluebells for your ladyship's nose to smell on—and I ha' seen the King once at Oxford, and he's as like the King as fingernail to fingernail, and I thought at first it was the King, only you know the King's married, for King Louis——

ROSAMUND.

Married!

MARGERY.

Years and years, my lady, for her husband, King Louis——

ROSAMUND.

Hush!

MARGERY.

—And I thought if it were the King's brother he had a better bride than the King, for the people do say that his is bad beyond all reckoning, and——

ROSAMUND.

The people lie.

MARGERY.

Very like, my lady, but most on 'em know an honest woman and a lady when they see her, and besides they say, she makes songs, and that's against her, for I never knew an honest woman that could make songs, tho' to be sure our mother 'ill sing me old songs by the hour, but then, God help her, she had 'em from her mother, and her mother from her mother back and back for ever so long, but none on 'em ever made songs, and they were all honest.

ROSAMUND.

Go, you shall tell me of her some other time.

MARGERY.

There's none so much to tell on her, my lady, only she kept the seventh commandment better than some I know on, or I couldn't look your ladyship i' the face, and she brew'd the best ale in all Glo'ster, that is to say in her time when she had the 'Crown.'

ROSAMUND.

The crown! who?

MARGERY.

Mother.

ROSAMUND.

I mean her whom you call—fancy—my husband's brother's wife.

MARGERY.

Oh, Queen Eleanor. Yes, my lady; and tho' I be sworn not to speak a word, I can tell you all about her, if——

ROSAMUND.

No word now. I am faint and sleepy. Leave me. Nay—go. What! will you anger me?

[*Exit* MARGERY.

He charged me not to question any of those
About me. Have I? no! she question'd *me*.

Did she not slander *him?* Should she stay here?
May she not tempt me, being at my side,
To question *her?* Nay, can I send her hence
Without his kingly leave! I am in the dark.
I have lived, poor bird, from cage to cage, and known
Nothing but him—happy to know no more,
So that he loved me—and he loves me—yes,
And bound me by his love to secrecy
Till his own time.
Eleanor, Eleanor, have I
Not heard ill things of her in France? Oh, she's
The Queen of France. I see it—some confusion,
Some strange mistake. I did not hear aright,
Myself confused with parting from the King.

MARGERY (*behind scene*).

Bee mustn't buzz,
Whoop—but he knows.

ROSAMUND.

Yet her—what her? he hinted of some her—
When he was here before—
Something that would displease me. Hath he stray'd
From love's clear path into the common bush,
And, being scratch'd, returns to his true rose,
Who hath not thorn enough to prick him for it,
Ev'n with a word?

MARGERY (*behind scene*).

Bird mustn't tell,
Whoop—he can see.

ROSAMUND.

I would not hear him. Nay—there's more—he frown'd
'No mate for her, if it should come to that'—
To that—to what?

MARGERY (*behind scene*).

Whoop—but he knows,
Whoop—but he knows.

ROSAMUND.

O God! some dreadful truth is breaking on me—
Some dreadful thing is coming on me.

[*Enter* GEOFFREY.

Geoffrey!

GEOFFREY.

What are you crying for, when the sun shines?

ROSAMUND.

Hath not thy father left us to ourselves?

GEOFFREY.

Ay, but he's taken the rain with him. I hear Margery: I'll go play with her. [*Exit* GEOFFREY.

ROSAMUND.

Rainbow, stay,
Gleam upon gloom,
Bright as my dream,
Rainbow, stay!
But it passes away,
Gloom upon gleam,
Dark as my doom—
O rainbow, stay.

SCENE II.—*Outside the Woods near* ROSAMUND'S *Bower.*

ELEANOR. FITZURSE.

ELEANOR.

Up from the salt lips of the land we two
Have track'd the King to this dark inland wood;
And somewhere hereabouts he vanish'd. Here
His turtle builds: his exit is our adit:
Watch! he will out again, and presently,
Seeing he must to Westminster and crown
Young Henry there to-morrow.

FITZURSE.

We have watch'd

So long in vain, he hath pass'd out again,
And on the other side. [*A great horn winded.*
Hark! Madam!

ELEANOR.

Ay,
How ghostly sounds that horn in the black wood!
[*A countryman flying.*
Whither away, man? what are you flying from?

COUNTRYMAN.

The witch! the witch! she sits naked by a great heap of gold in the middle of the wood, and when the horn sounds she comes out as a wolf. Get you hence! a man passed in there to-day: I holla'd to him, but he didn't hear me: he'll never out again, the witch has got him. I daren't stay—I daren't stay!

ELEANOR.

Kind of the witch to give thee warning tho'.
[*Man flies.*
Is not this wood-witch of the rustic's fear
Our woodland Circe that hath witch'd the King?
[*Horn sounded.—Another flying.*

FITZURSE.

Again! stay, fool, and tell me why thou fliest.

COUNTRYMAN.

Fly thou too. The King keeps his forest head of game here, and when that horn sounds, a score of wolf-dogs are let loose that will tear thee piecemeal. Linger not till the third horn. Fly! [*Exit.*

ELEANOR.

This is the likelier tale. We have hit the place.
Now let the King's fine game look to itself. [*Horn.*

FITZURSE.

Again!—
And far on in the dark heart of the wood
I hear the yelping of the hounds of hell.

ELEANOR.

I have my dagger here to still their throats.

FITZURSE.

Nay, Madam, not to-night—the night is falling.
What can be done to-night?

ELEANOR.

Well—well—away.

SCENE III.—*Traitor's Meadow at Fréteval. Pavilions and Tents of the English and French Baronage.*

BECKET *and* HERBERT OF BOSHAM.

BECKET.

See here!

HERBERT.

What's here?

BECKET.

A notice from the priest,
To whom our John of Salisbury committed
The secret of the bower, that our wolf-Queen
Is prowling round the fold. I should be back
In England ev'n for this.

HERBERT.

These are by-things
In the great cause.

BECKET.

The by-things of the Lord
Are the wrong'd innocences that will cry
From all the hidden by-ways of the world
In the great day against the wronger. I know
Thy meaning. Perish she, I, all, before
The Church should suffer wrong!

HERBERT.

Do you see, my lord,
There is the King talking with Walter Map?

BECKET.

He hath the Pope's last letters, and they threaten
The immediate thunder-blast of interdict:
Yet he can scarce be touching upon those,
Or scarce would smile that fashion.

HERBERT.

Winter sunshine!
Beware of opening out thy bosom to it,
Lest thou, myself, and all thy flock should catch
An after ague-fit of trembling. Look!
He bows, he bares his head, he is coming hither.
Still with a smile.

Enter KING HENRY *and* WALTER MAP.

HENRY.

We have had so many hours together, Thomas,
So many happy hours alone together,
That I would speak with you once more alone.

BECKET.

My liege, your will and happiness are mine.

[*Exeunt* KING *and* BECKET.

HERBERT.

The same smile still.

WALTER MAP.

Do you see that great black cloud that hath come over the sun and cast us all into shadow?

HERBERT.

And feel it too.

WALTER MAP.

And see you yon side-beam that is forced from under it, and sets the church-tower over there all a-hell-fire as it were?

HERBERT.

Ay.

WALTER MAP.

It is this black, bell-silencing, anti-marrying, burial-hindering interdict that hath squeezed out this side-smile upon Canterbury, whereof may come conflagration. Were I Thomas, I wouldn't trust it. Sudden

change is a house on sand; and tho' I count Henry honest enough, yet when fear creeps in at the front, honesty steals out at the back, and the King at last is fairly scared by this cloud—this interdict. I have been more for the King than the Church in this matter—yea, even for the sake of the Church: for, truly, as the case stood, you had safelier have slain an archbishop than a she-goat: but our recoverer and upholder of customs hath in this crowning of young Henry by York and London so violated the immemorial usage of the Church, that, like the grave-digger's child I have heard of, trying to ring the bell, he hath half-hanged himself in the rope of the Church, or rather pulled all the Church with the Holy Father astride of it down upon his own head.

HERBERT.

Were you there?

WALTER MAP.

In the church rope?—no. I was at the crowning, for I have pleasure in the pleasure of crowds, and to read the faces of men at a great show.

HERBERT.

And how did Roger of York comport himself?

WALTER MAP.

As magnificently and archiepiscopally as our Thomas would have done: only there was a dare-devil in his eye—I should say a dare-Becket. He thought less of two kings than of one Roger the king of the occasion. Foliot is the holier man, perhaps the better. Once or twice there ran a twitch across his face as who should say what's to follow? but Salisbury was a calf cowed by Mother Church, and every now and then glancing about him like a thief at night when he hears a door open in the house and thinks 'the master.'

HERBERT.

And the father-king?

WALTER MAP.

The father's eye was so tender it would have called a goose off the green, and once he strove to hide his face, like the Greek king when his daughter was sacrificed, but he thought better of it: it was but the sacrifice of a kingdom to his son, a smaller matter: but as to the young crownling himself, he looked so malapert in the eyes, that had I fathered him I had given him more of the rod than the sceptre. Then followed the thunder of the captains and the shouting, and so we came on to the banquet, from whence there

puffed out such an incense of unctuosity into the nostrils of our Gods of Church and State, that Lucullus or Apicius might have sniffed it in their Hades of heathenism, so that the smell of their own roast had not come across it——

HERBERT.

Map, tho' you make your butt too big, you overshoot it.

WALTER MAP.

—For as to the fish, they de-miracled the miraculous draught, and might have sunk a navy——

HERBERT.

There again, Goliasing and Goliathising!

WALTER MAP.

—And as for the flesh at table, a whole Peter's sheet, with all manner of game, and four-footed things, and fowls——

HERBERT.

And all manner of creeping things too?

WALTER MAP.

—Well, there were Abbots—but they did not bring their women; and so we were dull enough at first, but in the end we flourished out into a merriment;

for the old King would act servitor and hand a dish to his son; whereupon my Lord of York—his fine-cut face bowing and beaming with all that courtesy which hath less loyalty in it than the backward scrape of the clown's heel—'great honour,' says he, 'from the King's self to the King's son.' Did you hear the young King's quip?

HERBERT.

No, what was it?

WALTER MAP.

Glancing at the days when his father was only Earl of Anjou, he answered:—'Should not an earl's son wait on a king's son?' And when the cold corners of the King's mouth began to thaw, there was a great motion of laughter among us, part real, part child-like, to be freed from the dulness—part royal, for King and kingling both laughed, and so we could not but laugh, as by a royal necessity—part childlike again—when we felt we had laughed too long and could not stay ourselves—many midriff-shaken even to tears, as springs gush out after earthquakes—but from those, as I said before, there may come a con-flagration—tho', to keep the figure moist and make it hold water, I should say rather, the lacrymation of a lamentation; but look if Thomas have not flung him-self at the King's feet. They have made it up again—for the moment.

HERBERT.

Thanks to the blessed Magdalen, whose day it is.

Re-enter HENRY *and* BECKET. (*During their conference the* BARONS *and* BISHOPS *of* FRANCE *and* ENGLAND *come in at back of stage.*)

BECKET.

Ay, King! for in thy kingdom, as thou knowest,
The spouse of the Great King, thy King, hath fallen—
The daughter of Zion lies beside the way—
The priests of Baal tread her underfoot—
The golden ornaments are stolen from her——

HENRY.

Have I not promised to restore her, Thomas,
And send thee back again to Canterbury?

BECKET.

Send back again those exiles of my kin
Who wander famine-wasted thro' the world.

HENRY.

Have I not promised, man, to send them back?

BECKET.

Yet one thing more. Thou hast broken thro' the pales
Of privilege, crowning thy young son by York,
London and Salisbury—not Canterbury.

HENRY.

York crown'd the Conqueror—not Canterbury.

BECKET.

There was no Canterbury in William's time.

HENRY.

But Hereford, you know, crown'd the first Henry.

BECKET.

But Anselm crown'd this Henry o'er again.

HENRY.

And thou shalt crown my Henry o'er again.

BECKET.

And is it then with thy good-will that I
Proceed against thine evil councillors,
And hurl the dread ban of the Church on those
Who made the second mitre play the first,
And acted me?

HENRY.

Well, well, then—have thy way!
It may be they were evil councillors.
What more, my lord Archbishop? What more, Thomas?
I make thee full amends. Say all thy say,
But blaze not out before the Frenchmen here.

BECKET.

More? Nothing, so thy promise be thy deed.

HENRY (*holding out his hand*).

Give me thy hand. My Lords of France and England,
My friend of Canterbury and myself
Are now once more at perfect amity.
Unkingly should I be, and most unknightly
Not striving still, however much in vain,
To rival him in Christian charity.

HERBERT.

All praise to Heaven, and sweet St. Magdalen!

HENRY.

And so farewell until we meet in England.

BECKET.

I fear, my liege, we may not meet in England.

HENRY.

How, do you make me a traitor?

BECKET.

No, indeed!
That be far from thee.

HENRY.

Come, stay with us, then,
Before you part for England.

BECKET.

I am bound
For that one hour to stay with good King Louis,
Who helpt me when none else.

HERBERT.

He said thy life
Was not one hour's worth in England save
King Henry gave thee first the kiss of peace.

HENRY.

He said so? Louis, did he? look you, Herbert.

When I was in mine anger with King Louis,
I sware I would not give the kiss of peace,
Not on French ground, nor any ground but English,
Where his cathedral stands. Mine old friend, Thomas,
I would there were that perfect trust between us,
That health of heart, once ours, ere Pope or King
Had come between us! Even now—who knows?—
I might deliver all things to thy hand—
If . . . but I say no more . . . farewell, my lord.

BECKET.

Farewell, my liege!

[*Exit* HENRY, *then the* BARONS *and* BISHOPS.

WALTER MAP.

There again! when the full fruit of the royal promise might have dropt into thy mouth hadst thou but opened it to thank him.

BECKET.

He fenced his royal promise with an *if*.

WALTER MAP.

And is the King's *if* too high a stile for your lordship to overstep and come at all things in the next field?

BECKET.

Ay, if this *if* be like the Devil's '*if*
Thou wilt fall down and worship me.'

HERBERT.

Oh, Thomas,
I could fall down and worship thee, my Thomas,
For thou hast trodden this wine-press alone.

BECKET.

Nay, of the people there are many with me.

WALTER MAP.

I am not altogether with you, my lord, tho' I am none of those that would raise a storm between you, lest ye should draw together like two ships in a calm. You wrong the King: he meant what he said to-day. Who shall vouch for his to-morrows? One word further. Doth not the *fewness* of anything make the fulness of it in estimation? Is not virtue prized mainly for its rarity and great baseness loathed as an exception: for were all, my lord, as noble as yourself, who would look up to you? and were all as base as—who shall I say—Fitzurse and his following—who would look down upon them? My lord, you have

put so many of the King's household out of communion, that they begin to smile at it.

BECKET.

At their peril, at their peril——

WALTER MAP.

—For tho' the drop may hollow out the dead stone, doth not the living skin thicken against perpetual whippings? This is the second grain of good counsel I ever proffered thee, and so cannot suffer by the rule of frequency. Have I sown it in salt? I trust not, for before God I promise you the King hath many more wolves than he can tame in his woods of England, and if it suit their purpose to howl for the King, and you still move against him, you may have no less than to die for it: but God and his free wind grant your lordship a happy home-return and the King's kiss of peace in Kent. Farewell! I must follow the King. [*Exit.*

HERBERT.

Ay, and I warrant the customs. Did the King
Speak of the customs?

BECKET.

No!—To die for it—
I live to die for it, I die to live for it.

The State will die, the Church can never die.
The King's not like to die for that which dies;
But I must die for that which never dies.
It will be so—my visions in the Lord:
It must be so, my friend! the wolves of England
Must murder her one shepherd, that the sheep
May feed in peace. False figure, Map would say.
Earth's falses are heaven's truths. And when my voice
Is martyr'd mute, and this man disappears,
That perfect trust may come again between us,
And there, there, there, not here I shall rejoice
To find my stray sheep back within the fold.
The crowd are scattering, let us move away!
And thence to England. [*Exeunt.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*The outskirts of the Bower.*

GEOFFREY (*coming out of the wood*).

Light again! light again! Margery? no, that's a finer thing there. How it glitters!

ELEANOR (*entering*).

Come to me, little one. How camest thou hither?

GEOFFREY.

On my legs.

ELEANOR.

And mighty pretty legs too. Thou art the prettiest child I ever saw. Wilt thou love me?

GEOFFREY.

No; I only love mother.

ELEANOR.

Ay; and who is thy mother?

GEOFFREY.

They call her—— But she lives secret, you see.

ELEANOR.

Why?

GEOFFREY.

Don't know why.

ELEANOR.

Ay, but some one comes to see her now and then. Who is he?

GEOFFREY.

Can't tell.

ELEANOR.

What does she call him?

GEOFFREY.

My liege.

ELEANOR.

Pretty one, how camest thou?

GEOFFREY.

There was a bit of yellow silk here and there, and it looked pretty like a glowworm, and I thought if I followed it I should find the fairies.

ELEANOR.

I am the fairy, pretty one, a good fairy to thy mother. Take me to her.

GEOFFREY.

There are good fairies and bad fairies, and sometimes she cries, and can't sleep sound o' nights because of the bad fairies.

ELEANOR.

She shall cry no more; she shall sleep sound enough if thou wilt take me to her. I am her good fairy.

GEOFFREY.

But you don't look like a good fairy. Mother does. You are not pretty, like mother.

ELEANOR.

We can't all of us be as pretty as thou art—(*aside*) little bastard. Come, here is a golden chain I will give thee if thou wilt lead me to thy mother.

GEOFFREY.

No—no gold. Mother says gold spoils all. Love is the only gold.

ELEANOR.

I love thy mother, my pretty boy. Show me where thou camest out of the wood.

GEOFFREY.

By this tree; but I don't know if I can find the way back again.

ELEANOR.

Where's the warder?

GEOFFREY.

Very bad. Somebody struck him.

ELEANOR.

Ay? who was that?

GEOFFREY.

Can't tell. But I heard say he had had a stroke, or you'd have heard his horn before now. Come along, then; we shall see the silk here and there, and I want my supper. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—ROSAMUND'S *Bower.*

ROSAMUND.

The boy so late; pray God, he be not lost.
I sent this Margery, and she comes not back;
I sent another, and she comes not back.
I go myself—so many alleys, crossings,
Paths, avenues—nay, if I lost him, now
The folds have fallen from the mystery,
And left all naked, I were lost indeed.

Enter GEOFFREY *and* ELEANOR.

Geoffrey, the pain thou hast put me to!

[*Seeing* ELEANOR.

Ha, you!

How came you hither?

ELEANOR.

Your own child brought me hither!

GEOFFREY.

You said you couldn't trust Margery, and I watched her and followed her into the woods, and I lost her and went on and on till I found the light and the lady, and she says she can make you sleep o' nights.

ROSAMUND.

How dared you? Know you not this bower is secret,
Of and belonging to the King of England,
More sacred than his forests for the chase?
Nay, nay, Heaven help you; get you hence in haste
Lest worse befall you.

ELEANOR.

Child, I am mine own self
Of and belonging to the King. The King
Hath divers ofs and ons, ofs and belongings,
Almost as many as your true Mussulman—
Belongings, paramours, whom it pleases him
To call his wives; but so it chances, child,
That I am his main paramour, his sultana.
But since the fondest pair of doves will jar,
Ev'n in a cage of gold, we had words of late,
And thereupon he call'd my children bastards.
Do you believe that you are married to him?

ROSAMUND.

I *should* believe it.

ELEANOR.

You must not believe it,
Because I have a wholesome medicine here

Puts that belief asleep. Your answer, beauty!
Do you believe that you are married to him?

ROSAMUND.

Geoffrey, my boy, I saw the ball you lost in the fork of the great willow over the brook. Go. See that you do not fall in. Go.

GEOFFREY.

And leave you alone with the good fairy. She calls you beauty, but I don't like her looks. Well, you bid me go, and I'll have my ball anyhow. Shall I find you asleep when I come back?

ROSAMUND.

Go. [*Exit* GEOFFREY.

ELEANOR.

He is easily found again. *Do* you believe it?
I pray you then to take my sleeping-draught;
But if you should not care to take it—see!
[*Draws a dagger.*
What! have I scared the red rose from your face
Into your heart. But this will find it there,
And dig it from the root for ever.

ROSAMUND.

Help! help!

ELEANOR.

They say that walls have ears: but these, it seems,
Have none! and I have none—to pity thee.

ROSAMUND.

I do beseech you—my child is so young,
So backward too; I cannot leave him yet.
I am not so happy I could not die myself,
But the child is so young. You have children—his;
And mine is the King's child; so, if you love him—
Nay, if you love him, there is great wrong done
Somehow: but if you do not—there are those
Who say you do not love him—let me go
With my young boy, and I will hide my face,
Blacken and gipsyfy it: none shall know me;
The King shall never hear of me again,
But I will beg my bread along the world
With my young boy, and God will be our guide.
I never meant your harm in any way.
See, I can say no more.

ELEANOR.

Will you not say you are not married to him?

ROSAMUND.

Ay, Madam, I can *say* it, if you will.

ELEANOR.

Then is thy pretty boy a bastard?

ROSAMUND.

No.

ELEANOR.

And thou thyself a proven wanton?

ROSAMUND.

No.

I am none such. I never loved but one.
I have heard of such that range from love to love,
Like the wild beast—if you can call it love.
I have heard of such—yea, even among those
Who sit on thrones—I never saw any such,
Never knew any such, and howsoever
You do misname me, match'd with any such,
I am snow to mud.

ELEANOR.

The more the pity then
That thy true home—the heavens—cry out for thee
Who art too pure for earth.

Enter FITZURSE.

FITZURSE.

Give her to me.

ELEANOR.

The Judas-lover of our passion-play
Hath track'd us hither.

FITZURSE.

Well, why not? I follow'd
You and the child: he babbled all the way.
Give her to me to make my honeymoon.

ELEANOR.

Ay, as the bears love honey. Could you keep her
Indungeon'd from one whisper of the wind,
Dark even from a side glance of the moon,
And oublietted in the centre—No!
I follow out my hate and thy revenge.

FITZURSE.

You bad me take revenge another way—
To bring her to the dust. . . . Come with me, love,
And I will love thee. . . . Madam, let her live.
I have a far-off burrow where the King
Would miss her and for ever.

ELEANOR.

How sayest thou, sweetheart?
Wilt thou go with him? he will marry thee.

ROSAMUND.

Give me the poison; set me free of him!

[ELEANOR *offers the vial.*

No, no! I will not have it.

ELEANOR.

Then this other,
The wiser choice, because my sleeping-draught
May bloat thy beauty out of shape, and make
Thy body loathsome even to thy child;
While this but leaves thee with a broken heart,
A doll-face blanch'd and bloodless, over which
If pretty Geoffrey do not break his own,
It must be broken for him.

ROSAMUND.

O I see now
Your purpose is to fright me—a troubadour
You play with words. You had never used so many,
Not if you meant it, I am sure. The child . . .
No . . . mercy! No! (*Kneels.*)

ELEANOR.

Play! . . . that bosom never
Heaved under the King's hand with such true passion
As at this loveless knife that stirs the riot,

Which it will quench in blood! Slave, if he love thee,
Thy life is worth the wrestle for it: arise,
And dash thyself against me that I may slay thee!
The worm! shall I let her go? But ha! what's here?
By very God, the cross I gave the King!
His village darling in some lewd caress
Has wheedled it off the King's neck to her own.
By thy leave, beauty. Ay, the same! I warrant
Thou hast sworn on this my cross a hundred times
Never to leave him—and that merits death,
False oath on holy cross—for thou must leave him
To-day, but not quite yet. My good Fitzurse,
The running down the chase is kindlier sport
Ev'n than the death. Who knows but that thy lover
May plead so pitifully, that I may spare thee?
Come hither, man: stand there. (*To Rosamund*)
Take thy one chance;
Catch at the last straw. Kneel to thy lord Fitzurse;
Crouch even because thou hatest him; fawn upon him
For thy life and thy son's.

ROSAMUND (*rising*).

I am a Clifford,
My son a Clifford and Plantagenet.
I am to die then, tho' there stand beside thee
One who might grapple with thy dagger, if he

Had aught of man, or thou of woman; or I
Would bow to such a baseness as would make me
Most worthy of it: both of us will die,
And I will fly with my sweet boy to heaven,
And shriek to all the saints among the stars:
'Eleanor of Aquitaine, Eleanor of England!
Murder'd by that adulteress Eleanor,
Whose doings are a horror to the east,
A hissing in the west!' Have we not heard?
Raymond of Poitou, thine own uncle—nay,
Geoffrey Plantagenet, thine own husband's father—
Nay, ev'n the accursed heathen Saladdeen——
Strike!
I challenge thee to meet me before God.
Answer me there.

ELEANOR (*raising the dagger*).

This in thy bosom, fool,
And after in thy bastard's!

Enter BECKET *from behind. Catches hold of her arm.*

BECKET.

Murderess!

[*The dagger falls; they stare at one another. After a pause.*

ELEANOR.

My lord, we know you proud of your fine hand,

But having now admired it long enough,
We find that it is mightier than it seems—
At least mine own is frailer: you are laming it.

BECKET.

And lamed and maim'd to dislocation, better
Than raised to take a life which Henry bad me
Guard from the stroke that dooms thee after death
To wail in deathless flame.

ELEANOR.

Nor you, nor I
Have now to learn, my lord, that our good Henry
Says many a thing in sudden heats, which he
Gainsays by next sunrising—often ready
To tear himself for having said as much.
My lord, Fitzurse——

BECKET.

He too! what dost thou here?
Dares the bear slouch into the lion's den?
One downward plunge of his paw would rend away
Eyesight and manhood, life itself, from thee.
Go, lest I blast thee with anathema,
And make thee a world's horror.

FITZURSE.

My lord, I shall
Remember this.

BECKET.

I *do* remember thee;
Lest I remember thee to the lion, go.

[*Exit* FITZURSE.

Take up your dagger; put it in the sheath.

ELEANOR.

Might not your courtesy stoop to hand it me?
But crowns must bow when mitres sit so high.
Well—well—too costly to be left or lost.

[*Picks up the dagger.*

I had it from an Arab soldan, who,
When I was there in Antioch, marvell'd at
Our unfamiliar beauties of the west;
But wonder'd more at my much constancy
To the monk-king, Louis, our former burthen,
From whom, as being too kin, you know, my lord,
God's grace and Holy Church deliver'd us.
I think, time given, I could have talk'd him out of
His ten wives into one. Look at the hilt.
What excellent workmanship. In our poor west
We cannot do it so well.

BECKET.

We can do worse.
Madam, I saw your dagger at her throat;
I heard your savage cry.

ELEANOR.

Well acted, was it?
A comedy meant to seem a tragedy—
A feint, a farce. My honest lord, you are known
Thro' all the courts of Christendom as one
That mars a cause with over-violence.
You have wrong'd Fitzurse. I speak not of myself.
We thought to scare this minion of the King
Back from her churchless commerce with the King
To the fond arms of her first love, Fitzurse,
Who swore to marry her. You have spoilt the farce.
My savage cry? Why, she—she—when I strove
To work against her license for her good,
Bark'd out at me such monstrous charges, that
The King himself, for love of his own sons,
If hearing, would have spurn'd her; whereupon
I menaced her with this, as when we threaten
A yelper with a stick. Nay, I deny not
That I was somewhat anger'd. Do you hear me?
Believe or no, I care not. You have lost
The ear of the King. I have it. . . . My lord Paramount,
Our great High-priest, will not your Holiness
Vouchsafe a gracious answer to your Queen?

BECKET.

Rosamund hath not answer'd you one word;

Madam, I will not answer you one word.
Daughter, the world hath trick'd thee. Leave it, daughter;
Come thou with me to Godstow nunnery,
And live what may be left thee of a life
Saved as by miracle alone with Him
Who gave it.

Re-enter GEOFFREY.

GEOFFREY.

Mother, you told me a great fib: it wasn't in the willow.

BECKET.

Follow us, my son, and we will find it for thee—
Or something manlier.

[*Exeunt* BECKET, ROSAMUND, *and* GEOFFREY.

ELEANOR.

The world hath trick'd her—that's the King; if so,
There was the farce, the feint—not mine. And yet
I am all but sure my dagger was a feint
Till the worm turn'd—not life shot up in blood,
But death drawn in;—(*looking at the vial*) *this* was no feint then? no.
But can I swear to that, had she but given
Plain answer to plain query? nay, methinks

Had she but bow'd herself to meet the wave
Of humiliation, worshipt whom she loathed,
I should have let her be, scorn'd her too much
To harm her. Henry—Becket tells him this—
To take my life might lose him Aquitaine.
Too politic for that. Imprison me?
No, for it came to nothing—only a feint.
Did she not tell me I was playing on her?
I'll swear to mine own self it was a feint.
Why should I swear, Eleanor, who am, or was,
A sovereign power? The King plucks out their eyes
Who anger him, and shall not I, the Queen,
Tear out her heart—kill, kill with knife or venom
One of his slanderous harlots? 'None of such?'
I love her none the more. Tut, the chance gone,
She lives—but not for him; one point is gain'd.
O I, that thro' the Pope divorced King Louis,
Scorning his monkery,—I that wedded Henry,
Honouring his manhood will he not mock at me
The jealous fool balk'd of her will—with *him?*
But he and he must never meet again.
Reginald Fitzurse!

Re-enter FITZURSE.

FITZURSE.

Here, Madam, at your pleasure.

ELEANOR.

My pleasure is to have a man about me.
Why did you slink away so like a cur?

FITZURSE.

Madam, I am as much man as the King.
Madam, I fear Church-censures like your King.

ELEANOR.

He grovels to the Church when he's black-blooded,
But kinglike fought the proud archbishop,—kinglike
Defied the Pope, and, like his kingly sires,
The Normans, striving still to break or bind
The spiritual giant with our island laws
And customs, made me for the moment proud
Ev'n of that stale Church-bond which link'd me with him
To bear him kingly sons. I am not so sure
But that I love him still. Thou as much man!
No more of that; we will to France and be
Beforehand with the King, and brew from out
This Godstow-Becket intermeddling such
A strong hate-philtre as may madden him—madden
Against his priest beyond all hellebore.

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*Castle in Normandy. King's Chamber.*

HENRY, ROGER OF YORK, FOLIOT, JOCELYN OF SALISBURY.

ROGER OF YORK.

Nay, nay, my liege,
He rides abroad with armed followers,
Hath broken all his promises to thyself,
Cursed and anathematised us right and left,
Stirr'd up a party there against your son—

HENRY.

Roger of York, you always hated him,
Even when you both were boys at Theobald's.

ROGER OF YORK.

I always hated boundless arrogance.
In mine own cause I strove against him there,
And in thy cause I strive against him now.

HENRY.

I cannot think he moves against my son,
Knowing right well with what a tenderness
He loved my son.

ROGER OF YORK.

Before you made him king.
But Becket ever moves against a king.
The Church is all—the crime to be a king.
We trust your Royal Grace, lord of more land
Than any crown in Europe, will not yield
To lay your neck beneath your citizens' heel.

HENRY.

Not to a Gregory of my throning! No.

FOLIOT.

My royal liege, in aiming at your love,
It may be sometimes I have overshot
My duties to our Holy Mother Church,
Tho' all the world allows I fall no inch
Behind this Becket, rather go beyond
In scourgings, macerations, mortifyings,
Fasts, disciplines that clear the spiritual eye,
And break the soul from earth. Let all that be.
I boast not: but you know thro' all this quarrel
I still have cleaved to the crown, in hope the crown

Would cleave to me that but obey'd the crown,
Crowning your son; for which our loyal service,
And since we likewise swore to obey the customs,
York and myself, and our good Salisbury here,
Are push'd from out communion of the Church.

JOCELYN OF SALISBURY.

Becket hath trodden on us like worms, my liege;
Trodden one half dead; one half, but half-alive,
Cries to the King.

HENRY (*aside*).

Take care o' thyself, O King.

JOCELYN OF SALISBURY.

Being so crush'd and so humiliated
We scarcely dare to bless the food we eat
Because of Becket.

HENRY.

What would ye have me do?

ROGER OF YORK.

Summon your barons; take their counsel: yet
I know—could swear—as long as Becket breathes,
Your Grace will never have one quiet hour.

HENRY.

What? . . . Ay . . . but pray you do not work upon me.

I see your drift . . . it may be so . . . and yet
You know me easily anger'd. Will you hence?
He shall absolve you . . . you shall have redress.
I have a dizzying headache. Let me rest.
I'll call you by and by.

[*Exeunt* ROGER OF YORK, FOLIOT, *and* JOCELYN OF SALISBURY.

Would he were dead! I have lost all love for him.
If God would take him in some sudden way—
Would he were dead. [*Lies down.*

PAGE (*entering*).

My liege, the Queen of England.

HENRY.

God's eyes! [*Starting up.*

Enter ELEANOR.

ELEANOR.

Of England? Say of Aquitaine.
I am no Queen of England. I had dream'd
I was the bride of England, and a queen.

HENRY.

And,—while you dream'd you were the bride of England,—
Stirring her baby-king against me? ha!

ELEANOR.

The brideless Becket is thy king and mine:
I will go live and die in Aquitaine.

HENRY.

Except I clap thee into prison here,
Lest thou shouldst play the wanton there again.
Ha, you of Aquitaine! O you of Aquitaine!
You were but Aquitaine to Louis—no wife;
You are only Aquitaine to me—no wife.

ELEANOR.

And why, my lord, should I be wife to one
That only wedded me for Aquitaine?
Yet this no wife—her six and thirty sail
Of Provence blew you to your English throne;
And this no wife has born you four brave sons,
And one of them at least is like to prove
Bigger in our small world than thou art.

HENRY.

Ay—
Richard, if he *be* mine—I hope him mine.
But thou art like enough to make him thine.

ELEANOR.

Becket is like enough to make all his.

HENRY.

Methought I had recover'd of the Becket,
That all was planed and bevell'd smooth again,
Save for some hateful cantrip of thine own.

ELEANOR.

I will go live and die in Aquitaine.
I dream'd I was the consort of a king,
Not one whose back his priest has broken.

HENRY.

What!
Is the end come? You, will you crown my foe
My victor in mid-battle? I will be
Sole master of my house. The end is mine.
What game, what juggle, what devilry are you playing?
Why do you thrust this Becket on me again?

ELEANOR.

Why? for I *am* true wife, and have my fears
Lest Becket thrust you even from your throne.
Do you know this cross, my liege?

HENRY (*turning his head*).

Away! Not I.

ELEANOR.

Not ev'n the central diamond, worth, I think,
Half of the Antioch whence I had it.

HENRY.

That?

ELEANOR.

I gave it you, and you your paramour;
She sends it back, as being dead to earth,
So dead henceforth to you.

HENRY.

Dead! you have murder'd her,
Found out her secret bower and murder'd her.

ELEANOR.

Your Becket knew the secret of your bower.

HENRY (*calling out*).

Ho there! thy rest of life is hopeless prison.

ELEANOR.

And what would my own Aquitaine say to that?
First, free thy captive from *her* hopeless prison.

HENRY.

O devil, can I free her from the grave?

ELEANOR.

You are too tragic: both of us are players
In such a comedy as our court of Provence
Had laugh'd at. That's a delicate Latin lay
Of Walter Map: the lady holds the cleric
Lovelier than any soldier, his poor tonsure
A crown of Empire. Will you have it again?
(*Offering the cross. He dashes it down.*)
St. Cupid, that is too irreverent.
Then mine once more. (*Puts it on.*)
Your cleric hath your lady.
Nay, what uncomely faces, could he see you!
Foam at the mouth because King Thomas, lord
Not only of your vassals but amours,
Thro' chastest honour of the Decalogue
Hath used the full authority of his Church
To put her into Godstow nunnery.

HENRY.

To put her into Godstow nunnery!
He dared not—liar! yet, yet I remember—
I do remember.
He bad me put her into a nunnery—

Into Godstow, into Hellstow, Devilstow!
The Church! the Church!
God's eyes! I would the Church were down in hell!
[*Exit.*

ELEANOR.

Aha!

Enter the four KNIGHTS.

FITZURSE.

What made the King cry out so furiously?

ELEANOR.

Our Becket, who will not absolve the Bishops.
I think ye four have cause to love this Becket.

FITZURSE.

I hate him for his insolence to all.

DE TRACY.

And I for all his insolence to thee.

DE BRITO.

I hate him for I hate him is my reason,
And yet I hate him for a hypocrite.

DE MORVILLE.

I do not love him, for he did his best
To break the barons, and now braves the King.

ELEANOR.

Strike, then, at once, the King would have him—See!

Re-enter HENRY.

HENRY.

No man to love me, honour me, obey me!
Sluggards and fools!
The slave that eat my bread has kick'd his King!
The dog I cramm'd with dainties worried me!
The fellow that on a lame jade came to court,
A ragged cloak for saddle—he, he, he,
To shake my throne, to push into my chamber—
My bed, where ev'n the slave is private—he—
I'll have her out again, he shall absolve
The bishops—they but did my will—not you—
Sluggards and fools, why do you stand and stare?
You are no king's men—you—you—you are Becket's men.
Down with King Henry! up with the Archbishop!
Will no man free me from this pestilent priest? [*Exit.*

[*The* KNIGHTS *draw their swords.*

ELEANOR.

Are ye king's men? I am king's woman, I.

THE KNIGHTS.

King's men! King's men!

SCENE II.—*A Room in Canterbury Monastery.*

BECKET *and* JOHN OF SALISBURY.

BECKET.

York said so?

JOHN OF SALISBURY.

Yes: a man may take good counsel
Ev'n from his foe.

BECKET.

York will say anything.
What is he saying now? gone to the King
And taken our anathema with him. York!
Can the King de-anathematise this York?

JOHN OF SALISBURY.

Thomas, I would thou hadst return'd to England,
Like some wise prince of this world from his wars,
With more of olive-branch and amnesty
For foes at home—thou hast raised the world against
thee.

BECKET.

Why, John, my kingdom is not of this world.

JOHN OF SALISBURY.

If it were more of this world it might be
More of the next. A policy of wise pardon
Wins here as well as there. To bless thine enemies——

BECKET.

Ay, mine, not Heaven's.

JOHN OF SALISBURY.

And may there not be something
Of this world's leaven in thee too, when crying
On Holy Church to thunder out her rights
And thine own wrong so pitilessly. Ah, Thomas,
The lightnings that we think are only Heaven's
Flash sometimes out of earth against the heavens.
The soldier, when he lets his whole self go
Lost in the common good, the common wrong,
Strikes truest ev'n for his own self. I crave
Thy pardon—I have still thy leave to speak.
Thou hast waged God's war against the King; and yet
We are self-uncertain creatures, and we may,

Yea, even when we know not, mix our spites
And private hates with our defence of Heaven.

[*Enter* EDWARD GRIM.

BECKET.

Thou art but yesterday from Cambridge, Grim;
What say ye there of Becket?

GRIM.

I believe him
The bravest in our roll of Primates down
From Austin—there are some—for there are men
Of canker'd judgment everywhere——

BECKET.

Who hold
With York, with York against me.

GRIM.

Well, my lord,
A stranger monk desires access to you.

BECKET.

York against Canterbury, York against God!
I am open to him.

[*Exit* GRIM.

Enter ROSAMUND *as a Monk.*

ROSAMUND.

Can I speak with you
Alone, my father?

BECKET.

Come you to confess?

ROSAMUND.

Not now.

BECKET.

Then speak; this is my other self,
Who like my conscience never lets me be.

ROSAMUND (*throwing back the cowl*).

I know him; our good John of Salisbury.

BECKET.

Breaking already from thy noviciate
To plunge into this bitter world again—
These wells of Marah. I am grieved, my daughter.
I thought that I had made a peace for thee.

ROSAMUND.

Small peace was mine in my noviciate, father.
Thro' all closed doors a dreadful whisper crept
That thou wouldst excommunicate the King.

I could not eat, sleep, pray: I had with me
The monk's disguise thou gavest me for my bower:
I think our Abbess knew it and allow'd it.
I fled, and found thy name a charm to get me
Food, roof, and rest. I met a robber once,
I told him I was bound to see the Archbishop;
'Pass on,' he said, and in thy name I pass'd
From house to house. In one a son stone-blind
Sat by his mother's hearth: he had gone too far
Into the King's own woods; and the poor mother,
Soon as she learnt I was a friend of thine,
Cried out against the cruelty of the King.
I said it was the King's courts, not the King;
But she would not believe me, and she wish'd
The Church were king: she had seen the Archbishop once,
So mild, so kind. The people love thee, father.

BECKET.

Alas! when I was Chancellor to the King,
I fear I was as cruel as the King.

ROSAMUND.

Cruel? Oh, no—it is the law, not he;
The customs of the realm.

BECKET.

The customs! customs!

ROSAMUND.

My lord, you have not excommunicated him?
Oh, if you have, absolve him!

BECKET.

Daughter, daughter,
Deal not with things you know not.

ROSAMUND.

I know *him*.
Then you have done it, and I call *you* cruel.

JOHN OF SALISBURY.

No, daughter, you mistake our good Archbishop;
For once in France the King had been so harsh,
He thought to excommunicate him—Thomas,
You could not—old affection master'd you,
You falter'd into tears.

ROSAMUND.

God bless him for it.

BECKET.

Nay, make me not a woman, John of Salisbury,
Nor make me traitor to my holy office.
Did not a man's voice ring along the aisle,
'The King is sick and almost unto death.'
How could I excommunicate him then?

ROSAMUND.

And wilt thou excommunicate him now?

BECKET.

Daughter, my time is short, I shall not do it.
And were it longer—well—I should not do it.

ROSAMUND.

Thanks in this life, and in the life to come.

BECKET.

Get thee back to thy nunnery with all haste;
Let this be thy last trespass. But one question—
How fares thy pretty boy, the little Geoffrey?
No fever, cough, croup, sickness?

ROSAMUND.

No, but saved

From all that by our solitude. The plagues
That smite the city spare the solitudes.

BECKET.

God save him from all sickness of the soul!
Thee too, thy solitude among thy nuns,
May that save thee! Doth he remember me?

ROSAMUND.

I warrant him.

BECKET.

He is marvellously like thee.

ROSAMUND.

Liker the King.

BECKET.

No, daughter.

ROSAMUND.

Ay, but wait
Till his nose rises; he will be very king.

BECKET.

Ev'n so: but think not of the King: farewell!

ROSAMUND.

My lord, the city is full of armed men.

BECKET.

Ev'n so: farewell!

ROSAMUND.

I will but pass to vespers,
And breathe one prayer for my liege-lord the King,
His child and mine own soul, and so return.

BECKET.

Pray for me too: much need of prayer have I.

[ROSAMUND *kneels and goes.*

Dan John, how much we lose, we celibates,
Lacking the love of woman and of child.

JOHN OF SALISBURY.

More gain than loss; for of your wives you shall
Find one a slut whose fairest linen seems
Foul as her dust-cloth, if she used it—one
So charged with tongue, that every thread of thought
Is broken ere it joins—a shrew to boot,
Whose evil song far on into the night
Thrills to the topmost tile—no hope but death;
One slow, fat, white, a burthen of the hearth;
And one that being thwarted ever swoons
And weeps herself into the place of power;
And one an *uxor pauperis Ibyci.*

So rare the household honeymaking bee,
Man's help! but we, we have the Blessed Virgin
For worship, and our Mother Church for bride;
And all the souls we saved and father'd here
Will greet us as our babes in Paradise.
What noise was that? she told us of arm'd men
Here in the city. Will you not withdraw?

BECKET.

I once was out with Henry in the days
When Henry loved me, and we came upon
A wild-fowl sitting on her nest, so still
I reach'd my hand and touch'd; she did not stir;
The snow had frozen round her, and she sat
Stone-dead upon a heap of ice-cold eggs.
Look! how this love, this mother, runs thro' all
The world God made—even the beast—the bird!

JOHN OF SALISBURY.

Ay, still a lover of the beast and bird?
But these arm'd men—will you not hide yourself?
Perchance the fierce De Brocs from Saltwood Castle
To assail our Holy Mother lest she brood
Too long o'er this hard egg, the world, and send
Her whole heart's heat into it, till it break
Into young angels. Pray you, hide yourself.

BECKET.

There was a little fair-hair'd Norman maid
Lived in my mother's house: if Rosamund is
The world's rose, as her name imports her—she
Was the world's lily.

JOHN OF SALISBURY.

Ay, and what of her?

BECKET.

She died of leprosy.

JOHN OF SALISBURY.

I know not why
You call these old things back again, my lord.

BECKET.

The drowning man, they say, remembers all
The chances of his life, just ere he dies.

JOHN OF SALISBURY.

Ay—but these arm'd men—will *you* drown *yourself?*
He loses half the meed of martyrdom
Who will be martyr when he might escape.

BECKET.

What day of the week? Tuesday?

JOHN OF SALISBURY.

Tuesday, my lord.

BECKET.

On a Tuesday was I born, and on a Tuesday
Baptized; and on a Tuesday did I fly
Forth from Northampton; on a Tuesday pass'd
From England into bitter banishment;
On a Tuesday at Pontigny came to me
The ghostly warning of my martyrdom;
On a Tuesday from mine exile I return'd,
And on a Tuesday——

[TRACY *enters, then* FITZURSE, DE BRITO, *and* DE MORVILLE. MONKS *following.*

—on a Tuesday——Tracy!

A long silence, broken by FITZURSE *saying, contemptuously,*

God help thee!

JOHN OF SALISBURY (*aside*).

How the good Archbishop reddens!
He never yet could brook the note of scorn.

FITZURSE.

My lord, we bring a message from the King
Beyond the water; will you have it alone,
Or with these listeners near you?

BECKET.

As you will.

FITZURSE.

Nay, as *you* will.

BECKET.

Nay, as *you* will.

JOHN OF SALISBURY.

Why then
Better perhaps to speak with them apart.
Let us withdraw.

[*All go out except the four* KNIGHTS *and* BECKET.

FITZURSE.

We are all alone with him.
Shall I not smite him with his own cross-staff?

DE MORVILLE.

No, look! the door is open: let him be.

FITZURSE.

The King condemns your excommunicating——

BECKET.

This is no secret, but a public matter.
In here again!

[JOHN OF SALISBURY *and* MONKS *return.*

Now, sirs, the King's commands!

FITZURSE.

The King beyond the water, thro' our voices,
Commands you to be dutiful and leal
To your young King on this side of the water,
Not scorn him for the foibles of his youth.
What! you would make his coronation void
By cursing those who crown'd him. Out upon you!

BECKET.

Reginald, all men know I loved the Prince.
His father gave him to my care, and I
Became his second father: he had his faults,
For which I would have laid mine own life down
To help him from them, since indeed I loved him,
And love him next after my lord his father.
Rather than dim the splendour of his crown
I fain would treble and quadruple it

With revenues, realms, and golden provinces
So that were done in equity.

FITZURSE.

You have broken
Your bond of peace, your treaty with the King—
Wakening such brawls and loud disturbances
In England, that he calls you oversea
To answer for it in his Norman courts.

BECKET.

Prate not of bonds, for never, oh, never again
Shall the waste voice of the bond-breaking sea
Divide me from the mother church of England,
My Canterbury. Loud disturbances!
Oh, ay—the bells rang out even to deafening,
Organ and pipe, and dulcimer, chants and hymns
In all the churches, trumpets in the halls,
Sobs, laughter, cries: they spread their raiment down
Before me—would have made my pathway flowers,
Save that it was mid-winter in the street,
But full mid-summer in those honest hearts.

FITZURSE.

The King commands you to absolve the bishops
Whom you have excommunicated.

BECKET.

I?

Not I, the Pope. Ask *him* for absolution.

FITZURSE.

But you advised the Pope.

BECKET.

And so I did.

They have but to submit.

THE FOUR KNIGHTS.

The King commands you.

We are all King's men.

BECKET.

King's men at least should know
That their own King closed with me last July
That I should pass the censures of the Church
On those that crown'd young Henry in this realm,
And trampled on the rights of Canterbury.

FITZURSE.

What! dare you charge the King with treachery?
He sanction thee to excommunicate
The prelates whom he chose to crown his son!

BECKET.

I spake no word of treachery, Reginald.
But for the truth of this I make appeal
To all the archbishops, bishops, prelates, barons,
Monks, knights, five hundred, that were there and heard.
Nay, you yourself were there: you heard yourself.

FITZURSE.

I was not there.

BECKET.

I saw you there.

FITZURSE.

I was not.

BECKET.

You were. I never forget anything.

FITZURSE.

He makes the King a traitor, me a liar.
How long shall we forbear him?

JOHN OF SALISBURY (*drawing* BECKET *aside*).

O my good lord,
Speak with them privately on this hereafter.
You see they have been revelling, and I fear

Are braced and brazen'd up with Christmas wines
For any murderous brawl.

BECKET.

And yet they prate
Of mine, my brawls, when those, that name themselves
Of the King's part, have broken down our barns,
Wasted our diocese, outraged our tenants,
Lifted our produce, driven our clerics out—
Why they, your friends, those ruffians, the De Brocs,
They stood on Dover beach to murder me,
They slew my stags in mine own manor here,
Mutilated, poor brute, my sumpter-mule,
Plunder'd the vessel full of Gascon wine,
The old King's present, carried off the casks,
Kill'd half the crew, dungeon'd the other half
In Pevensey Castle——

DE MORVILLE.

Why not rather then,
If this be so, complain to your young King,
Not punish of your own authority?

BECKET.

Mine enemies barr'd all access to the boy.
They knew he loved me.
Hugh, Hugh, how proudly you exalt your head!
Nay, when they seek to overturn our rights,

I ask no leave of king, or mortal man,
To set them straight again. Alone I do it.
Give to the King the things that are the King's,
And those of God to God.

FITZURSE.

Threats! threats! ye hear him.
What! will he excommunicate all the world?

[*The* KNIGHTS *come round* BECKET.

DE TRACY.

He shall not.

DE BRITO.

Well, as yet—I should be grateful—
He hath not excommunicated *me*.

BECKET.

Because thou wast *born* excommunicate.
I never spied in thee one gleam of grace.

DE BRITO.

Your Christian's Christian charity!

BECKET.

By St. Denis——

DE BRITO.

Ay, by St. Denis, now will he flame out,
And lose his head as old St. Denis did.

BECKET.

Ye think to scare me from my loyalty
To God and to the Holy Father. No!
Tho' all the swords in England flash'd above me
Ready to fall at Henry's word or yours—
Tho' all the loud-lung'd trumpets upon earth
Blared from the heights of all the thrones of her kings,
Blowing the world against me, I would stand
Clothed with the full authority of Rome,
Mail'd in the perfect panoply of faith,
First of the foremost of their files, who die
For God, to people heaven in the great day
When God makes up his jewels. Once I fled—
Never again, and you—I marvel at you—
Ye know what is between us. Ye have sworn
Yourselves my men when I was Chancellor—
My vassals—and yet threaten your Archbishop
In his own house.

KNIGHTS.

Nothing can be between us
That goes against our fealty to the King.

FITZURSE.

And in his name we charge you that ye keep
This traitor from escaping.

BECKET.

Rest you easy,
For I am easy to keep. I shall not fly.
Here, here, here will you find me.

DE MORVILLE.

Know you not
You have spoken to the peril of your life?

BECKET.

As I shall speak again.

FITZURSE, DE TRACY, *and* DE BRITO.

To arms!

[*They rush out,* DE MORVILLE *lingers.*

BECKET.

De Morville,
I had thought so well of you; and even now
You seem the least assassin of the four.
Oh, do not damn yourself for company!
Is it too late for me to save your soul?
I pray you for one moment stay and speak.

DE MORVILLE.

Becket, it *is* too late. [*Exit.*

BECKET.

Is it too late?
Too late on earth may be too soon in hell.

KNIGHTS (*in the distance*).

Close the great gate—ho, there—upon the town.

BECKET'S RETAINERS.

Shut the hall-doors. [*A pause.*

BECKET.

You hear them, brother John;
Why do you stand so silent, brother John?

JOHN OF SALISBURY.

For I was musing on an ancient saw,
Suaviter in modo, fortiter in re,
Is strength less strong when hand-in-hand with grace?
Gratior in pulchro corpore virtus. Thomas,
Why should you heat yourself for such as these?

BECKET.

Methought I answer'd moderately enough.

JOHN OF SALISBURY.

As one that blows the coal to cool the fire.

My lord, I marvel why you never lean
On any man's advising but your own.

BECKET.

Is it so, Dan John? well, what should I have done?

JOHN OF SALISBURY.

You should have taken counsel with your friends
Before these bandits brake into your presence.
They seek—you make—occasion for your death.

BECKET.

My counsel is already taken, John.
I am prepared to die.

JOHN OF SALISBURY.

We are sinners all,
The best of all not all-prepared to die.

BECKET.

God's will be done!

JOHN OF SALISBURY.

Ay, well. God's will be done!

GRIM (*re-entering*).

My lord, the knights are arming in the garden
Beneath the sycamore.

BECKET.

Good! let them arm.

GRIM.

And one of the De Brocs is with them, Robert,
The apostate monk that was with Randulf here.
He knows the twists and turnings of the place.

BECKET.

No fear!

GRIM.

No fear, my lord.

[*Crashes on the hall-doors. The* MONKS *flee.*

BECKET (*rising*).

Our dovecote flown!
I cannot tell why monks should all be cowards.

JOHN OF SALISBURY.

Take refuge in your own cathedral, Thomas.

BECKET.

Do they not fight the Great Fiend day by day?
Valour and holy life should go together.
Why should all monks be cowards?

JOHN OF SALISBURY.

Are they so?
I say, take refuge in your own cathedral.

BECKET.

Ay, but I told them I would wait them here.

GRIM.

May they not say you dared not show yourself
In your old place? and vespers are beginning.
[Bell rings for vespers till end of scene.
You should attend the office, give them heart.
They fear you slain: they dread they know not what.

BECKET.

Ay, monks, not men.

GRIM.

I am a monk, my lord.
Perhaps, my lord, you wrong us.
Some would stand by you to the death.

BECKET.

Your pardon.

JOHN OF SALISBURY.

He said, 'Attend the office.'

BECKET.

Attend the office?
Why then—The Cross!—who bears my Cross before me?
Methought they would have brain'd me with it, John.
[GRIM *takes it.*

GRIM.

I! Would that I could bear thy cross indeed!

BECKET.

The Mitre!

JOHN OF SALISBURY.

Will you wear it?—there!
[BECKET *puts on the mitre.*

BECKET.

The Pall!
I go to meet my King! [*Puts on the pall.*

GRIM.

To meet the King?
[*Crashes on the doors as they go out.*

JOHN OF SALISBURY.

Why do you move with such a stateliness?
Can you not hear them yonder like a storm,
Battering the doors, and breaking thro' the walls?

BECKET.

Why do the heathen rage? My two good friends,
What matters murder'd here, or murder'd there?
And yet my dream foretold my martyrdom
In mine own church. It is God's will. Go on.
Nay, drag me not. We must not seem to fly.

SCENE III.—*North Transept of Canterbury Cathedral. On the right hand a flight of steps leading to the Choir, another flight on the left, leading to the North Aisle. Winter afternoon slowly darkening. Low thunder now and then of an approaching storm.* MONKS *heard chanting the service.* ROSAMUND *kneeling.*

ROSAMUND.

O blessed saint, O glorious Benedict,—
These arm'd men in the city, these fierce faces—
Thy holy follower founded Canterbury—
Save that dear head which now is Canterbury,
Save him, he saved my life, he saved my child,
Save him, his blood would darken Henry's name;
Save him till all as saintly as thyself
He miss the searching flame of purgatory,
And pass at once perfect to Paradise.

[*Noise of steps and voices in the cloisters.*

Hark! Is it they? Coming! He is not here—
Not yet, thank heaven. O save him!

[*Goes up steps leading to choir.*

BECKET (*entering, forced along by* JOHN OF SALISBURY *and* GRIM).

No, I tell you!
I cannot bear a hand upon my person,
Why do you force me thus against my will?

GRIM.

My lord, we force you from your enemies.

BECKET.

As you would force a king from being crown'd.

JOHN OF SALISBURY.

We must not force the crown of martyrdom.

[*Service stops.* MONKS *come down from the stairs that lead to the choir.*

MONKS.

Here is the great Archbishop! He lives! he lives!
Die with him, and be glorified together.

BECKET.

Together? . . . get you back! go on with the office.

MONKS.

Come, then, with us to vespers.

BECKET.

How can I come
When you so block the entry? Back, I say!
Go on with the office. Shall not Heaven be served
Tho' earth's last earthquake clash'd the minster-bells,
And the great deeps were broken up again,
And hiss'd against the sun? [*Noise in the cloisters.*

MONKS.

The murderers, hark!
Let us hide! let us hide!

BECKET.

What do these people fear?

MONKS.

Those arm'd men in the cloister.

BECKET.

Be not such cravens!
I will go out and meet them.

GRIM *and others.*

Shut the doors!
We will not have him slain before our face.

[*They close the doors of the transept. Knocking.*

Fly, fly, my lord, before they burst the doors!

[*Knocking.*

BECKET.

Why, these are our own monks who follow'd us!
And will you bolt them out, and have *them* slain?
Undo the doors: the church is not a castle:
Knock, and it shall be open'd. Are you deaf?
What, have I lost authority among you?
Stand by, make way!

[*Opens the doors. Enter* MONKS *from cloister.*

Come in, my friends, come in!
Nay, faster, faster!

MONKS.

Oh, my lord Archbishop,
A score of knights all arm'd with swords and axes—
To the choir, to the choir!

Monks divide, part flying by the stairs on the right, part by those on the left. The rush of these last bears BECKET *along with them some way up the steps, where he is left standing alone.*

BECKET.

Shall I too pass to the choir,
And die upon the Patriarchal throne
Of all my predecessors?

JOHN OF SALISBURY.

No, to the crypt!
Twenty steps down. Stumble not in the darkness,
Lest they should seize thee.

GRIM.

To the crypt? no—no,
To the chapel of St. Blaise beneath the roof!

JOHN OF SALISBURY (*pointing upward and downward*).

That way, or this! Save thyself either way.

BECKET.

Oh, no, not either way, nor any way
Save by that way which leads thro' night to light.
Not twenty steps, but one.
And fear not I should stumble in the darkness,
Not tho' it be their hour, the power of darkness,
But my hour too, the power of light in darkness!
I am not in the darkness but the light,

Seen by the Church in Heaven, the Church on earth—
The power of life in death to make her free!

[*Enter the four* KNIGHTS. JOHN OF SALISBURY *flies to the altar of St. Benedict.*

FITZURSE.

Here, here, King's men!

[*Catches hold of the last flying* MONK.

Where is the traitor Becket?

MONK.

I am not he! I am not he, my lord.
I am not he indeed!

FITZURSE.

Hence to the fiend!

[*Pushes him away.*

Where is this treble traitor to the King?

DE TRACY.

Where is the Archbishop, Thomas Becket?

BECKET.

Here.

No traitor to the King, but Priest of God,
Primate of England. [*Descending into the transept.*
I am he ye seek.
What would ye have of me?

FITZURSE.

Your life.

DE TRACY.

Your life.

DE MORVILLE.

Save that you will absolve the bishops.

BECKET.

Never,—
Except they make submission to the Church.
You had my answer to that cry before.

DE MORVILLE.

Why, then you are a dead man; flee!

BECKET.

I will not.
I am readier to be slain, than thou to slay.
Hugh, I know well thou hast but half a heart
To bathe this sacred pavement with my blood.
God pardon thee and these, but God's full curse
Shatter you all to pieces if ye harm
One of my flock!

FITZURSE.

Was not the great gate shut?

They are thronging in to vespers—half the town.
We shall be overwhelm'd. Seize him and carry him!
Come with us—nay—thou art our prisoner—come!

DE MORVILLE.

Ay, make him prisoner, do not harm the man.

[FITZURSE *lays hold of the* ARCHBISHOP'S *pall.*

BECKET.

Touch me not!

DE BRITO.

How the good priest gods himself!
He is not yet ascended to the Father.

FITZURSE.

I will not only touch, but drag thee hence.

BECKET.

Thou art my man, thou art my vassal. Away!

[*Flings him off till he reels, almost to falling.*

DE TRACY (*lays hold of the pall*).

Come; as he said, thou art our prisoner.

BECKET.

Down!

[*Throws him headlong.*

FITZURSE (*advances with drawn sword*).

I told thee that I should remember thee!

BECKET.

Profligate pander!

FITZURSE.

Do you hear that? strike, strike.

[*Strikes off the* ARCHBISHOP'S *mitre, and wounds him in the forehead.*

BECKET (*covers his eyes with his hand*).

I do commend my cause to God, the Virgin,
St. Denis of France and St. Alphege of England,
And all the tutelar Saints of Canterbury.

[GRIM *wraps his arms about the* ARCHBISHOP.

Spare this defence, dear brother.

[TRACY *has arisen, and approaches, hesitatingly, with his sword raised.*

FITZURSE.

Strike him, Tracy!

ROSAMUND (*rushing down steps from the choir*).

No, No, No, No!

FITZURSE.

This wanton here. De Morville,
Hold her away.

DE MORVILLE.

I hold her.

ROSAMUND (*held back by* DE MORVILLE, *and stretching out her arms*).

Mercy, mercy,
As you would hope for mercy.

FITZURSE.

Strike, I say.

GRIM.

O God, O noble knights, O sacrilege!
Strike our Archbishop in his own cathedral!
The Pope, the King, will curse you—the whole world
Abhor you; ye will die the death of dogs!
Nay, nay, good Tracy. [*Lifts his arm.*

FITZURSE.

Answer not, but strike.

DE TRACY.

There is my answer then.

[*Sword falls on* GRIM'S *arm, and glances from it, wounding* BECKET.

GRIM.

Mine arm is sever'd.
I can no more—fight out the good fight—die
Conqueror. [*Staggers into the chapel of St. Benedict.*

BECKET (*falling on his knees*).

At the right hand of Power—
Power and great glory—for thy Church, O Lord—
Into Thy hands, O Lord—into Thy hands!——
[*Sinks prone.*

DE BRITO.

This last to rid thee of a world of brawls! (*Kills him.*)
The traitor's dead, and will arise no more.

FITZURSE.

Nay, have we still'd him? What! the great Archbishop!
Does he breathe? No?

DE TRACY.

No, Reginald, he is dead.

(*Storm bursts.*)[1]

DE MORVILLE.

Will the earth gape and swallow us?

DE BRITO.

The deed's done—

Away!

[DE BRITO, DE TRACY, FITZURSE, *rush out, crying 'King's men!'* DE MORVILLE *follows slowly. Flashes of lightning thro' the Cathedral,* ROSAMUND *seen kneeling by the body of* BECKET.

[1] *A tremendous thunderstorm actually broke over the Cathedral as the murderers were leaving it.*

THE FALCON.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

THE COUNT FEDERIGO DEGLI ALBERIGHI.
FILIPPO, *Count's foster-brother.*
THE LADY GIOVANNA.
ELISABETTA, *the Count's nurse.*

THE FALCON.

SCENE.—*An Italian Cottage. Castle and Mountains seen through Window.*

ELISABETTA discovered seated on stool in window darning. The COUNT with Falcon on his hand comes down through the door at back. A withered wreath on the wall.

ELISABETTA.

So, my lord, the Lady Giovanna, who hath been away so long, came back last night with her son to the castle.

COUNT.

Hear that, my bird! Art thou not jealous of her?
My princess of the cloud, my plumed purveyor,
My far-eyed queen of the winds—thou that canst soar
Beyond the morning lark, and howsoe'er
Thy quarry wind and wheel, swoop down upon him
Eagle-like, lightning-like—strike, make his feathers
Glance in mid heaven. [*Crosses to chair.*
I would thou hadst a mate!
Thy breed will die with thee, and mine with me:
I am as lone and loveless as thyself. [*Sits in chair.*

Giovanna here! Ay, ruffle thyself—*be* jealous!
Thou should'st be jealous of her. Tho' I bred thee
The full-train'd marvel of all falconry,
And love thee and thou me, yet if Giovanna
Be here again—No, no! Buss me, my bird!
The stately widow has no heart for me.
Thou art the last friend left me upon earth—
No, no again to that. [*Rises and turns.*
My good old nurse,
I had forgotten thou wast sitting there.

ELISABETTA.

Ay, and forgotten thy foster-brother too.

COUNT.

Bird-babble for my falcon! Let it pass.
What art thou doing there?

ELISABETTA.

Darning your lordship.
We cannot flaunt it in new feathers now:
Nay, if we *will* buy diamond necklaces
To please our lady, we must darn, my lord.
This old thing here (*points to necklace round her neck*),
they are but blue beads—my Piero,
God rest his honest soul, he bought 'em for me,
Ay, but he knew I meant to marry him.

How couldst thou do it, my son? How couldst thou do it?

COUNT.

She saw it at a dance, upon a neck
Less lovely than her own, and long'd for it.

ELISABETTA.

She told thee as much?

COUNT.

No, no—a friend of hers.

ELISABETTA.

Shame on her that she took it at thy hands,
She rich enough to have bought it for herself!

COUNT.

She would have robb'd me then of a great pleasure.

ELISABETTA.

But hath she yet return'd thy love?

COUNT.

Not yet!

ELISABETTA.

She should return thy necklace then.

COUNT.

Ay, if
She knew the giver; but I bound the seller
To silence, and I left it privily
At Florence, in her palace.

ELISABETTA.

And sold thine own
[illegible]. She not know? She knows
There's none such other——

COUNT.

Madman anywhere.
Speak freely, tho' to call a madman mad
Will hardly help to make him sane again.

Enter FILIPPO.

FILIPPO.

Ah, the women, the women! Ah, Monna Giovanna, you here again! you that have the face of an angel and the heart of a—that's too positive! You that have a score of lovers and have not a heart for any of them—that's positive-negative: you that have *not* the head of a toad, and *not* a heart like the jewel in it—that's too negative; you that have a cheek like a peach and a heart like the stone in it—that's positive again—that's better!

ELISABETTA.

Sh—sh—Filippo!

FILIPPO (*turns half round*).

Here has our master been a-glorifying and a-velveting and a-silking himself, and a-peacocking and a-spreading to catch her eye for a dozen year, till he hasn't an eye left in his own tail to flourish among the peahens, and all along o' you, Monna Giovanna, all along o' you!

ELISABETTA.

Sh—sh—Filippo! Can't you hear that you are saying behind his back what you see you are saying afore his face?

COUNT.

Let him—he never spares me to my face!

FILIPPO.

No, my lord, I never spare your lordship to your lordship's face, nor behind your lordship's back, nor to right, nor to left, nor to round about and back to your lordship's face again, for I'm honest, your lordship.

COUNT.

Come, come, Filippo, what is there in the larder?

[ELISABETTA *crosses to fireplace and puts on wood.*

FILIPPO.

Shelves and hooks, shelves and hooks, and when I see the shelves I am like to hang myself on the hooks.

COUNT.

No bread?

FILIPPO.

Half a breakfast for a rat!

COUNT.

Milk?

FILIPPO.

Three laps for a cat!

COUNT.

Cheese?

FILIPPO.

A supper for twelve mites.

COUNT.

Eggs?

FILIPPO.

One, but addled.

COUNT.

No bird?

FILIPPO.

Half a tit and a hern's bill.

COUNT.

Let be thy jokes and thy jerks, man! Anything or nothing?

FILIPPO.

Well, my lord, if all-but-nothing be anything, and one plate of dried prunes be all-but-nothing, then there is anything in your lordship's larder at your lordship's service, if your lordship care to call for it.

COUNT.

Good mother, happy was the prodigal son,
For he return'd to the rich father; I
But add my poverty to thine. And all
Thro' following of my fancy. Pray thee make
Thy slender meal out of those scraps and shreds
Filippo spoke of. As for him and me,
There sprouts a salad in the garden still.
(*To the Falcon.*) Why didst thou miss thy quarry yester-even?
To-day, my beauty, thou must dash us down
Our dinner from the skies. Away, Filippo!

[*Exit, followed by* FILIPPO.

ELISABETTA.

I knew it would come to this. She has beggared him. I always knew it would come to this! (*Goes up to table as if to resume darning, and looks out of window.*) Why, as I live, there is Monna Giovanna coming down the hill from the castle. Stops and stares at our cottage. Ay, ay! stare at it: it's all you have left us. Shame upon you! *She* beautiful! sleek as a miller's mouse! Meal enough, meat enough, well fed; but beautiful—bah! Nay, see, why she turns down the path through our little vineyard, and I sneezed three times this morning. Coming to visit my lord, for the first time in her life too! Why, bless the saints! I'll be bound to confess her love to him at last. I forgive her, I forgive her! I knew it would come to this—I always knew it must come to this! (*Going up to door during latter part of speech and opens it.*) Come in, Madonna, come in. (*Retires to front of table and curtseys as the* LADY GIOVANNA *enters, then moves chair towards the hearth.*) Nay, let me place this chair for your ladyship.

[LADY GIOVANNA *moves slowly down stage, then crosses to chair, looking about her, bows as she sees the Madonna over fireplace, then sits in chair.*

LADY GIOVANNA.

Can I speak with the Count?

ELISABETTA.

Ay, my lady, but won't you speak with the old woman first, and tell her all about it and make her happy? for I've been on my knees every day for these half-dozen years in hope that the saints would send us this blessed morning; and he always took you so kindly, he always took the world so kindly. When he was a little one, and I put the bitters on my breast to wean him, he made a wry mouth at it, but he took it so kindly, and your ladyship has given him bitters enough in this world, and he never made a wry mouth at you, he always took you so kindly—which is more than I did, my lady, more than I did—and he so handsome —and bless your sweet face, you look as beautiful this morning as the very Madonna her own self—and better late than never—but come when they will—then or now—it's all for the best, come when they will—they are made by the blessed saints—these marriages.

[*Raises her hands.*

LADY GIOVANNA.

Marriages? I shall never marry again!

ELISABETTA (*rises and turns*).

Shame on her then!

LADY GIOVANNA.

Where is the Count?

ELISABETTA.

Just gone

To fly his falcon.

LADY GIOVANNA.

Call him back and say

I come to breakfast with him.

ELISABETTA.

Holy mother!

To breakfast! Oh sweet saints! one plate of prunes!
Well, Madam, I will give your message to him.

[*Exit.*

LADY GIOVANNA.

His falcon, and I come to ask for his falcon,
The pleasure of his eyes—boast of his hand—
Pride of his heart—the solace of his hours—
His one companion here—nay, I have heard
That, thro' his late magnificence of living
And this last costly gift to mine own self,

[*Shows diamond necklace.*

He hath become so beggar'd, that his falcon
Ev'n wins his dinner for him in the field.

That must be talk, not truth, but truth or talk,
How can I ask for his falcon?

[*Rises and moves as she speaks.*

O my sick boy!

My daily fading Florio, it is thou
Hath set me this hard task, for when I say
What can I do—what can I get for thee?
He answers, 'Get the Count to give me his falcon,
And that will make me well.' Yet if I ask,
He loves me, and he knows I know he loves me!
Will he not pray me to return his love—
To marry him?—(*pause*)—I can never marry him.
His grandsire struck my grandsire in a brawl
At Florence, and my grandsire stabb'd him there.
The feud between our houses is the bar
I cannot cross; I dare not brave my brother,
Break with my kin. My brother hates him, scorns
The noblest-natured man alive, and I—
Who have that reverence for him that I scarce
Dare beg him to receive his diamonds back—
How can I, dare I, ask him for his falcon?

[*Puts diamonds in her casket.*

Re-enter COUNT *and* FILIPPO. COUNT *turns to* FILIPPO.

COUNT.

Do what I said; I cannot do it myself.

FILIPPO.

Why then, my lord, we are pauper'd out and out.

COUNT.

Do what I said! [*Advances and bows low.*
Welcome to this poor cottage, my dear lady.

LADY GIOVANNA.

And welcome turns a cottage to a palace.

COUNT.

'Tis long since we have met!

LADY GIOVANNA.

To make amends
I come this day to break my fast with you.

COUNT.

I am much honour'd—yes— [*Turns to* FILIPPO.
Do what I told thee. Must I do it myself?

FILIPPO.

I will, I will. (*Sighs.*) Poor fellow! [*Exit.*

COUNT.

Lady, you bring your light into my cottage
Who never deign'd to shine into my palace.

My palace wanting you was but a cottage;
My cottage, while you grace it, is a palace.

LADY GIOVANNA.

In cottage or in palace, being still
Beyond your fortunes, you are still the king
Of courtesy and liberality.

COUNT.

I trust I still maintain my courtesy;
My liberality perforce is dead
Thro' lack of means of giving.

LADY GIOVANNA.

Yet I come
To ask a gift. [*Moves toward him a little.*

COUNT.

It will be hard, I fear,
To find one shock upon the field when all
The harvest has been carried.

LADY GIOVANNA.

But my boy—
(*Aside.*) No, no! not yet—I cannot!

COUNT.

Ay, how is he,
That bright inheritor of your eyes—your boy?

LADY GIOVANNA.

Alas, my Lord Federigo, he hath fallen
Into a sickness, and it troubles me.

COUNT.

Sick! is it so? why, when he came last year
To see me hawking, he was well enough:
And then I taught him all our hawking-phrases.

LADY GIOVANNA.

Oh yes, and once you let him fly your falcon.

COUNT.

How charm'd he was! what wonder?—A gallant boy,
A noble bird, each perfect of the breed.

LADY GIOVANNA (*sinks in chair*).

What do you rate her at?

COUNT.

My bird? a hundred
Gold pieces once were offer'd by the Duke.
I had no heart to part with her for money.

LADY GIOVANNA.

No, not for money. [COUNT *turns away and sighs.*
Wherefore do you sigh?

COUNT.

I have lost a friend of late.

LADY GIOVANNA.

I could sigh with you
For fear of losing more than friend, a son;
And if he leave me—all the rest of life—
That wither'd wreath were of more worth to me.
[*Looking at wreath on wall.*

COUNT.

That wither'd wreath is of more worth to me
Than all the blossom, all the leaf of this
New-wakening year. [*Goes and takes down wreath.*

LADY GIOVANNA.

And yet I never saw
The land so rich in blossom as this year.

COUNT (*holding wreath toward her*).

Was not the year when this was gather'd richer?

LADY GIOVANNA.

How long ago was that?

COUNT.

Alas, ten summers!

A lady that was beautiful as day
Sat by me at a rustic festival
With other beauties on a mountain meadow,
And she was the most beautiful of all;
Then but fifteen, and still as beautiful.
The mountain flowers grew thickly round about.
I made a wreath with some of these; I ask'd
A ribbon from her hair to bind it with;
I whisper'd, Let me crown you Queen of Beauty,
And softly placed the chaplet on her head.
A colour, which has colour'd all my life,
Flush'd in her face; then I was call'd away;
And presently all rose, and so departed.
Ah! she had thrown my chaplet on the grass,
And there I found it.

[*Lets his hands fall, holding wreath despondingly.*

LADY GIOVANNA (*after pause*).

How long since do you say?

COUNT.

That was the very year before you married.

LADY GIOVANNA.

When I was married you were at the wars.

COUNT.

Had she not thrown my chaplet on the grass,
It may be I had never seen the wars.

[*Replaces wreath whence he had taken it.*

LADY GIOVANNA.

Ah, but, my lord, there ran a rumour then
That you were kill'd in battle. I can tell you
True tears that year were shed for you in Florence.

COUNT.

It might have been as well for me. Unhappily
I was but wounded by the enemy there
And then imprison'd.

LADY GIOVANNA.

Happily, however,
I see you quite recover'd of your wound.

COUNT.

No, no, not quite, Madonna, not yet, not yet.

Re-enter FILIPPO.

FILIPPO.

My lord, a word with you.

COUNT.

Pray, pardon me!

[LADY GIOVANNA *crosses, and passes behind chair and takes down wreath; then goes to chair by table.*

COUNT (*to* FILIPPO).

What is it, Filippo?

FILIPPO.

Spoons, your lordship.

COUNT.

Spoons!

FILIPPO.

Yes, my lord, for wasn't my lady born with a golden spoon in her ladyship's mouth, and we haven't never so much as a silver one for the golden lips of her ladyship.

COUNT.

Have we not half a score of silver spoons?

FILIPPO.

Half o' one, my lord!

COUNT.

How half of one?

FILIPPO.

I trod upon him even now, my lord, in my hurry, and broke him.

COUNT.

And the other nine?

FILIPPO.

Sold! but shall I not mount with your lordship's leave to her ladyship's castle, in your lordship's and her ladyship's name, and confer with her ladyship's seneschal, and so descend again with some of her ladyship's own appurtenances?

COUNT.

Why—no, man. Only see your cloth be clean.

[*Exit* FILIPPO.

LADY GIOVANNA.

Ay, ay, this faded ribbon was the mode
In Florence ten years back. What's here? a scroll
Pinn'd to the wreath.
My lord, you have said so much
Of this poor wreath that I was bold enough
To take it down, if but to guess what flowers
Had made it; and I find a written scroll
That seems to run in rhymings. Might I read?

COUNT.

Ay, if you will.

LADY GIOVANNA.

It should be if you can.

(*Reads.*) 'Dead mountain.' Nay, for who could trace a hand
So wild and staggering?

COUNT.

This was penn'd, Madonna,
Close to the grating on a winter morn
In the perpetual twilight of a prison,
When he that made it, having his right hand
Lamed in the battle, wrote it with his left.

LADY GIOVANNA.

O heavens! the very letters seem to shake
With cold, with pain perhaps, poor prisoner! Well,
Tell me the words—or better—for I see
There goes a musical score along with them,
Repeat them to their music.

COUNT.

You can touch
No chord in me that would not answer you
In music.

LADY GIOVANNA.

That is musically said.

[COUNT *takes guitar.* LADY GIOVANNA *sits listening with wreath in her hand, and quietly removes scroll and places it on table at the end of the song.*

COUNT (*sings, playing guitar*).

'Dead mountain flowers, dead mountain-meadow flowers,
Dearer than when you made your mountain gay,
Sweeter than any violet of to-day,
Richer than all the wide world-wealth of May,
To me, tho' all your bloom has died away,
You bloom again, dead mountain-meadow flowers.'

Enter ELISABETTA *with cloth.*

ELISABETTA.

A word with you, my lord!

COUNT (*singing*).

'O mountain flowers!'

ELISABETTA.

A word, my lord! (*Louder*).

COUNT (*sings*).

'Dead flowers!'

ELISABETTA.

A word, my lord! (*Louder*).

COUNT.

I pray you pardon me again!

[LADY GIOVANNA, *looking at wreath.*

(COUNT *to* ELISABETTA.)

What is it?

ELISABETTA.

My lord, we have but one piece of earthenware to serve the salad in to my lady, and that cracked!

COUNT.

Why then, that flower'd bowl my ancestor
Fetch'd from the farthest east—we never use it
For fear of breakage—but this day has brought
A great occasion. You can take it, nurse!

ELISABETTA.

I did take it, my lord, but what with my lady's coming that had so flurried me, and what with the fear of breaking it, I did break it, my lord: it is broken!

COUNT.

My one thing left of value in the world!
No matter! see your cloth be white as snow!

ELISABETTA (*pointing thro' window*).

White? I warrant thee, my son, as the snow yonder on the very tip-top o' the mountain.

COUNT.

And yet to speak white truth, my good old mother,
I have seen it like the snow on the moraine.

ELISABETTA.

How can your lordship say so? There, my lord!
[*Lays cloth.*
O my dear son, be not unkind to me.
And one word more. [*Going—returns.*

COUNT (*touching guitar*).

Good! let it be but one.

ELISABETTA.

Hath she return'd thy love?

COUNT.

Not yet!

ELISABETTA.

And will she?

COUNT (*looking at* LADY GIOVANNA).

I scarce believe it!

ELISABETTA.

Shame upon her then! [*Exit.*

COUNT (*sings*).

'Dead mountain flowers'——
Ah well, my nurse has broken
The thread of my dead flowers, as she has broken
My china bowl. My memory is as dead.
[*Goes and replaces guitar.*
Strange that the words at home with me so long
Should fly like bosom friends when needed most.
So by your leave if you would hear the rest,
The writing.

LADY GIOVANNA (*holding wreath toward him*).

There! my lord, you are a poet,
And can you not imagine that the wreath,
Set, as you say, so lightly on her head,
Fell with her motion as she rose, and she,
A girl, a child, then but fifteen, however
Flutter'd or flatter'd by your notice of her,
Was yet too bashful to return for it?

COUNT.

Was it so indeed? was it so? was it so?
[*Leans forward to take wreath, and touches* LADY GIOVANNA'S *hand, which she withdraws hastily; he places wreath on corner of chair.*

LADY GIOVANNA (*with dignity*).

I did not say, my lord, that it was so;
I said you might imagine it was so.

Enter FILIPPO *with bowl of salad, which he places on table.*

FILIPPO.

Here's a fine salad for my lady, for tho' we have been a soldier, and ridden by his lordship's side, and seen the red of the battle-field, yet are we now drill-sergeant to his lordship's lettuces, and profess to be great in green things and in garden-stuff.

LADY GIOVANNA.

I thank you, good Filippo. [*Exit* FILIPPO.

Enter ELISABETTA *with bird on a dish which she places on table.*

ELISABETTA (*close to table*).

Here's a fine fowl for my lady; I had scant time to do him in. I hope he be not underdone, for we be undone in the doing of him.

LADY GIOVANNA.

I thank you, my good nurse.

FILIPPO (*re-entering with plate of prunes*).

And here are fine fruits for my lady—prunes, my lady, from the tree that my lord himself planted here in the blossom of his boyhood—and so I, Filippo, being, with your ladyship's pardon, and as your ladyship knows, his lordship's own foster-brother, would commend them to your ladyship's most peculiar appreciation. [*Puts plate on table.*

ELISABETTA.

Filippo!

LADY GIOVANNA (COUNT *leads her to table*).

Will you not eat with me, my lord?

COUNT.

I cannot,
Not a morsel, not one morsel. I have broken
My fast already. I will pledge you. Wine!
Filippo, wine!

[*Sits near table;* FILIPPO *brings flask, fills the* COUNT'S *goblet, then* LADY GIOVANNA'S; ELISABETTA *stands at the back of* LADY GIOVANNA'S *chair.*

COUNT.

It is but thin and cold,
Not like the vintage blowing round your castle.
We lie too deep down in the shadow here.
Your ladyship lives higher in the sun.

[*They pledge each other and drink.*

LADY GIOVANNA.

If I might send you down a flask or two
Of that same vintage? There is iron in it.
It has been much commended as a medicine.
I give it my sick son, and if you be
Not quite recover'd of your wound, the wine
Might help you. None has ever told me yet
The story of your battle and your wound.

FILIPPO (*coming forward*).

I can tell you, my lady, I can tell you.

ELISABETTA.

Filippo! will you take the word out of your master's own mouth?

FILIPPO.

Was it there to take? Put it there, my lord.

COUNT.

Giovanna, my dear lady, in this same battle
We had been beaten—they were ten to one.
The trumpets of the fight had echo'd down,
I and Filippo here had done our best,
And, having passed unwounded from the field,
Were seated sadly at a fountain side,
Our horses grazing by us, when a troop,
Laden with booty and with a flag of ours
Ta'en in the fight——

FILIPPO.

Ay, but we fought for it back,
And kill'd——

ELISABETTA.

Filippo!

COUNT.

A troop of horse——

FILIPPO.

Five hundred!

COUNT.

Say fifty!

FILIPPO.

And we kill'd 'em by the score!

ELISABETTA.

Filippo!

FILIPPO.

Well, well, well! I bite my tongue.

COUNT.

We may have left their fifty less by five.
However, staying not to count how many,
But anger'd at their flaunting of our flag,
We mounted, and we dashed into the heart of 'em.
I wore the lady's chaplet round my neck;
It served me for a blessed rosary.
I am sure that more than one brave fellow owed
His death to the charm in it.

ELISABETTA.

Hear that, my lady!

COUNT.

I cannot tell how long we strove before
Our horses fell beneath us; down we went
Crush'd, hack'd at, trampled underfoot. The night,
As some cold-manner'd friend may strangely do us
The truest service, had a touch of frost
That help'd to check the flowing of the blood.
My last sight ere I swoon'd was one sweet face

Crown'd with the wreath. *That* seem'd to come and go.
They left us there for dead!

ELISABETTA.

Hear that, my lady!

FILIPPO.

Ay, and I left two fingers there for dead. See, my lady! (*Showing his hand.*)

LADY GIOVANNA.

I see, Filippo!

FILIPPO.

And I have small hope of the gentleman gout in my great toe.

LADY GIOVANNA.

And why, Filippo? [*Smiling absently.*

FILIPPO.

I left him there for dead too!

ELISABETTA.

She smiles at him—how hard the woman is!
My lady, if your ladyship were not
Too proud to look upon the garland, you
Would find it stain'd——

COUNT (*rising*).

Silence, Elisabetta!

ELISABETTA.

Stain'd with the blood of the best heart that ever
Beat for one woman. [*Points to wreath on chair.*

LADY GIOVANNA (*rising slowly*).

I can eat no more!

COUNT.

You have but trifled with our homely salad,
But dallied with a single lettuce-leaf;
Not eaten anything.

LADY GIOVANNA.

Nay, nay, I cannot.
You know, my lord, I told you I was troubled.
My one child Florio lying still so sick,
I bound myself, and by a solemn vow,
That I would touch no flesh till he were well
Here, or else well in Heaven, where all is well.

[ELISABETTA *clears table of bird and salad:* FILIPPO *snatches up the plate of prunes and holds them to* LADY GIOVANNA.

FILIPPO.

But the prunes, my lady, from the tree that his lordship——

LADY GIOVANNA.

Not now, Filippo. My lord Federigo,
Can I not speak with you once more alone?

COUNT.

You hear, Filippo? My good fellow, go!

FILIPPO.

But the prunes that your lordship——

ELISABETTA.

Filippo!

COUNT.

Ay, prune our company of thine own and go!

ELISABETTA.

Filippo!

FILIPPO (*turning*).

Well, well! the women! [*Exit.*

COUNT.

And thou too leave us, my dear nurse, alone.

ELISABETTA (*folding up cloth and going*).

And me too! Ay, the dear nurse will leave you alone; but, for all that, she that has eaten the yolk is scarce like to swallow the shell.

[*Turns and curtseys stiffly to* LADY GIOVANNA, *then exit.* LADY GIOVANNA *takes out diamond necklace from casket.*

LADY GIOVANNA.

I have anger'd your good nurse; these old-world servants
Are all but flesh and blood with those they serve.
My lord, I have a present to return you,
And afterwards a boon to crave of you.

COUNT.

No, my most honour'd and long-worshipt lady,
Poor Federigo degli Alberighi
Takes nothing in return from you except
Return of his affection—can deny
Nothing to you that you require of him.

LADY GIOVANNA.

Then I require you to take back your diamonds—
[*Offering necklace.*
I doubt not they are yours. No other heart

Of such magnificence in courtesy
Beats—out of heaven. They seem'd too rich a prize
To trust with any messenger. I came
In person to return them. [*Count draws back.*
If the phrase
'Return' displease you, we will say—exchange them
For your—for your——

COUNT (*takes a step toward her and then back*).
For mine—and what of mine?

LADY GIOVANNA.
Well, shall we say this wreath and your sweet rhymes?

COUNT.
But have you ever worn my diamonds?

LADY GIOVANNA.
No!
For that would seem accepting of your love.
I cannot brave my brother—but be sure
That I shall never marry again, my lord!

COUNT.
Sure?

LADY GIOVANNA.
Yes!

COUNT.
Is this your brother's order?

LADY GIOVANNA.

No!

For he would marry me to the richest man
In Florence; but I think you know the saying—
'Better a man without riches, than riches without a man.'

COUNT.

A noble saying—and acted on would yield
A nobler breed of men and women. Lady,
I find you a shrewd bargainer. The wreath
That once you wore outvalues twentyfold
The diamonds that you never deign'd to wear.
But lay them there for a moment!

[*Points to table.* LADY GIOVANNA *places necklace on table.*

And be you
Gracious enough to let me know the boon
By granting which, if aught be mine to grant,
I should be made more happy than I hoped
Ever to be again.

LADY GIOVANNA.

Then keep your wreath,
But you will find me a shrewd bargainer still.
I cannot keep your diamonds, for the gift
I ask for, to *my* mind and at this present
Outvalues all the jewels upon earth.

COUNT.

It should be love that thus outvalues all.
You speak like love, and yet you love me not.
I have nothing in this world but love for you.

LADY GIOVANNA.

Love? it *is* love, love for my dying boy,
Moves me to ask it of you.

COUNT.

What? my time?
Is it my time? Well, I can give my time
To him that is a part of you, your son.
Shall I return to the castle with you? Shall I
Sit by him, read to him, tell him my tales,
Sing him my songs? You know that I can touch
The ghittern to some purpose.

LADY GIOVANNA.

No, not that!
I thank you heartily for that—and you,
I doubt not from your nobleness of nature,
Will pardon me for asking what I ask.

COUNT.

Giovanna, dear Giovanna, I that once
The wildest of the random youth of Florence
Before I saw you—all my nobleness

Of nature, as you deign to call it, draws
From you, and from my constancy to you.
No more, but speak.

LADY GIOVANNA.

I will. You know sick people,
More specially sick children, have strange fancies,
Strange longings; and to thwart them in their mood
May work them grievous harm at times, may even
Hasten their end. I would you had a son!
It might be easier then for you to make
Allowance for a mother—her—who comes
To rob you of your one delight on earth.
How often has my sick boy yearn'd for this!
I have put him off as often; but to-day
I dared not—so much weaker, so much worse
For last day's journey. I was weeping for him;
He gave me his hand: 'I should be well again
If the good Count would give me——'

COUNT.

Give me.

LADY GIOVANNA.

His falcon.

COUNT (*starts back*).

My falcon!

LADY GIOVANNA.

Yes, your falcon, Federigo!

COUNT.

Alas, I cannot!

LADY GIOVANNA.

Cannot? Even so!
I fear'd as much. O this unhappy world!
How shall I break it to him? how shall I tell him?
The boy may die: more blessed were the rags
Of some pale beggar-woman seeking alms
For her sick son, if he were like to live,
Than all my childless wealth, if mine must die.
I was to blame—the love you said you bore me—
My lord, we thank you for your entertainment,
[*With a stately curtsey.*
And so return—Heaven help him!—to our son.
[*Turns.*

COUNT (*rushes forward*).

Stay, stay, I am most unlucky, most unhappy.
You never had look'd in on me before,
And when you came and dipt your sovereign head
Thro' these low doors, you ask'd to eat with me.
I had but emptiness to set before you,
No not a draught of milk, no not an egg,
Nothing but my brave bird, my noble falcon,
My comrade of the house, and of the field.
She had to die for it—she died for you.
Perhaps I thought with those of old, the nobler

The victim was, the more acceptable
Might be the sacrifice. I fear you scarce
Will thank me for your entertainment now.

LADY GIOVANNA (*returning*).

I bear with him no longer.

COUNT.

No, Madonna!
And he will have to bear with it as he may.

LADY GIOVANNA.

I break with him for ever!

COUNT.

Yes, Giovanna,
But he will keep his love to you for ever!

LADY GIOVANNA.

You? you? not you! My brother! my hard brother!
O Federigo, Federigo, I love you!
Spite of ten thousand brothers, Federigo.
[*Falls at his feet.*

COUNT (*impetuously*).

Why then the dying of my noble bird
Hath served me better than her living—then
[*Takes diamonds from table.*

These diamonds are both yours and mine—have won
Their value again—beyond all markets—there
I lay them for the first time round your neck.
[*Lays necklace round her neck.*
And then this chaplet—No more feuds, but peace,
Peace and conciliation! I will make
Your brother love me. See, I tear away
The leaves were darken'd by the battle—
[*Pulls leaves off and throws them down.*
—crown you
Again with the same crown my Queen of Beauty.
[*Places wreath on her head.*
Rise—I could almost think that the dead garland
Will break once more into the living blossom.
Nay, nay, I pray you rise.
[*Raises her with both hands.*
We two together
Will help to heal your son—your son and mine—
We shall do it—we shall do it. [*Embraces her.*
The purpose of my being is accomplish'd,
And I am happy!

LADY GIOVANNA.

And I too, Federigo.

THE FORESTERS

THE FORESTERS

ROBIN HOOD AND MAID MARIAN

BY

ALFRED
LORD TENNYSON

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ACT I

SCENE I

THE BOND

SCENES II, III

THE OUTLAWRY

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

ROBIN HOOD, *Earl of Huntingdon.*
KING RICHARD, *Cœur de Lion.*
PRINCE JOHN.
LITTLE JOHN,
WILL SCARLET,
FRIAR TUCK,
MUCH,
} *Followers of Robin Hood.*
A JUSTICIARY.
SHERIFF OF NOTTINGHAM.
ABBOT OF ST. MARY'S.
SIR RICHARD LEA.
WALTER LEA, *son of Sir Richard Lea.*
MAID MARIAN, *daughter of Sir Richard Lea.*
KATE, *attendant on Marian.*
OLD WOMAN.

Retainers, Messengers, Merry Men, Mercenaries, Friars, Beggars, Sailors, Peasants (*men and women*), *&c.*

THE FORESTERS

ACT I

SCENE I.—*The garden before* SIR RICHARD LEA'S *castle.*

KATE (*gathering flowers*).

These roses for my Lady Marian; these lilies to lighten Sir Richard's black room, where he sits and eats his heart for want of money to pay the Abbot.

[*Sings.*

The warrior Earl of Allendale,
He loved the Lady Anne;
The lady loved the master well,
The maid she loved the man.

All in the castle garden,
Or ever the day began,
The lady gave a rose to the Earl,
The maid a rose to the man.

'I go to fight in Scotland
With many a savage clan;'
The lady gave her hand to the Earl,
The maid her hand to the man.

'Farewell, farewell, my warrior Earl!'
And ever a tear down ran.
She gave a weeping kiss to the Earl,
And the maid a kiss to the man.

Enter four ragged RETAINERS.

FIRST RETAINER.

You do well, Mistress Kate, to sing and to gather roses. You be fed with tit-bits, you, and we be dogs that have only the bones, till we be only bones our own selves.

SECOND RETAINER.

I am fed with tit-bits no more than you are, but I keep a good heart and make the most of it, and, truth to say, Sir Richard and my Lady Marian fare wellnigh as sparely as their people.

THIRD RETAINER.

And look at our suits, out at knee, out at elbow. We be more like scarecrows in a field than decent serving men; and then, I pray you, look at Robin Earl of Huntingdon's men.

FIRST RETAINER.

She hath looked well at one of 'em, Little John.

THIRD RETAINER.

Ay, how fine they be in their liveries, and each of 'em as full of meat as an egg, and as sleek and as round-about as a mellow codlin.

FOURTH RETAINER.

But I be worse off than any of you, for I be lean by nature, and if you cram me crop-full I be little better than Famine in the picture, but if you starve me I be Gaffer Death himself. I would like to show you, Mistress Kate, how bare and spare I be on the rib: I be lanker than an old horse turned out to die on the common.

KATE.

Spare me thy spare ribs, I pray thee; but now I ask you all, did none of you love young Walter Lea?

FIRST RETAINER.

Ay, if he had not gone to fight the king's battles, we should have better battels at home.

KATE.

Right as an Oxford scholar, but the boy was taken prisoner by the Moors.

FIRST RETAINER.

Ay.

KATE.

And Sir Richard was told he might be ransomed for two thousand marks in gold.

FIRST RETAINER.

Ay.

KATE.

Then he borrowed the monies from the Abbot of York, the Sheriff's brother. And if they be not paid back at the end of the year, the land goes to the Abbot.

FIRST RETAINER.

No news of young Walter?

KATE.

None, nor of the gold, nor the man who took out the gold: but now ye know why we live so stintedly, and why ye have so few grains to peck at. Sir Richard must scrape and scrape till he get to the land again. Come, come, why do ye loiter here? Carry fresh rushes into the dining-hall, for those that are there they be so greasy and smell so vilely that my Lady Marian holds her nose when she steps across it.

FOURTH RETAINER.

Why there, now! that very word 'greasy' hath a kind of unction in it, a smack of relish about it. The rats have gnawed 'em already. I pray Heaven we may not have to take to the rushes. [*Exeunt.*

KATE.

Poor fellows!

The lady gave her hand to the Earl,
The maid her hand to the man.

Enter LITTLE JOHN.

LITTLE JOHN.

My master, Robin the Earl, is always a-telling us that every man, for the sake of the great blessed Mother in heaven, and for the love of his own little mother on earth, should handle all womankind gently, and hold them in all honour, and speak small to 'em, and not scare 'em, but go about to come at their love with all manner of homages, and observances, and circumbendibuses.

KATE.

The lady gave a rose to the Earl,
The maid a rose to the man.

LITTLE JOHN (*seeing her*).

O the sacred little thing! What a shape! what lovely arms! A rose to the man! Ay, the man had given her a rose and she gave him another.

KATE.

Shall I keep one little rose for Little John? No.

LITTLE JOHN.

There, there! You see I was right. She hath a tenderness toward me, but is too shy to show it. It is in her, in the woman, and the man must bring it out of her.

KATE.

She gave a weeping kiss to the Earl,
The maid a kiss to the man.

LITTLE JOHN.

Did she? But there I am sure the ballad is at fault. It should have told us how the man first kissed the maid. She doesn't see me. Shall I be bold? shall I touch her? shall I give her the first kiss? O sweet Kate, my first love, the first kiss, the first kiss!

KATE (*turns and kisses him*).

Why lookest thou so amazed?

LITTLE JOHN.

I cannot tell; but I came to give thee the first kiss, and thou hast given it me.

KATE.

But if a man and a maid care for one another, does it matter so much if the maid give the first kiss?

LITTLE JOHN.

I cannot tell, but I had sooner have given thee the first kiss. I was dreaming of it all the way hither.

KATE.

Dream of it, then, all the way back, for now I will have none of it.

LITTLE JOHN.

Nay, now thou hast given me the man's kiss, let me give thee the maid's.

KATE.

If thou draw one inch nearer, I will give thee a buffet on the face.

LITTLE JOHN.

Wilt thou not give me rather the little rose for Little John?

KATE (*throws it down and tramples on it*).

There! [KATE *seeing* MARIAN *exit hurriedly.*

Enter MARIAN (*singing*).

Love flew in at the window,
As Wealth walk'd in at the door.
'You have come for you saw Wealth coming,' said I.
But he flutter'd his wings with a sweet little cry,
I'll cleave to you rich or poor.

Wealth dropt out of the window,
Poverty crept thro' the door.
'Well now you would fain follow Wealth,' said I,
But he flutter'd his wings as he gave me the lie,
I cling to you all the more.

LITTLE JOHN.

Thanks, my lady—inasmuch as I am a true believer in true love myself, and your Ladyship hath sung the old proverb out of fashion.

MARIAN.

Ay but thou hast ruffled my woman, Little John. She hath the fire in her face and the dew in her eyes. I believed thee to be too solemn and formal to be a ruffler. Out upon thee!

LITTLE JOHN.

I am no ruffler, my lady; but I pray you, my lady, if a man and a maid love one another, may the maid give the first kiss?

MARIAN.

It will be all the more gracious of her if she do.

LITTLE JOHN.

I cannot tell. Manners be so corrupt, and these are the days of Prince John. [*Exit.*

Enter SIR RICHARD LEA (*reading a bond*).

SIR RICHARD.

Marian!

MARIAN.

Father!

SIR RICHARD.

Who parted from thee even now?

MARIAN.

That strange starched stiff creature, Little John, the Earl's man. He would grapple with a lion like the King, and is flustered by a girl's kiss.

SIR RICHARD.

There never was an Earl so true a friend of the people as Lord Robin of Huntingdon.

MARIAN.

A gallant Earl. I love him as I hate John.

SIR RICHARD.

I fear me he hath wasted his revenues in the service of our good king Richard against the party of John, as I have done, as I have done: and where is Richard?

MARIAN.

Cleave to him, father! he will come home at last.

SIR RICHARD.

I trust he will, but if he do not I and thou are but beggars.

MARIAN.

We will be beggar'd then and be true to the King.

SIR RICHARD.

Thou speakest like a fool or a woman. Canst thou endure to be a beggar whose whole life hath been

folded like a blossom in the sheath, like a careless sleeper in the down; who never hast felt a want, to whom all things, up to this present, have come as freely as heaven's air and mother's milk?

MARIAN.

Tut, father! I am none of your delicate Norman maidens who can only broider and mayhap ride a-hawking with the help of the men. I can bake and I can brew, and by all the saints I can shoot almost as closely with the bow as the great Earl himself. I have played at the foils too with Kate: but is not to-day his birthday?

SIR RICHARD.

Dost thou love him indeed, that thou keepest a record of his birthdays? Thou knowest that the Sheriff of Nottingham loves thee.

MARIAN.

The Sheriff dare to love me? me who worship Robin the great Earl of Huntingdon? I love him as a damsel of his day might have loved Harold the Saxon, or Hereward the Wake. They both fought against the tyranny of the kings, the Normans. But then your Sheriff, your little man, if he dare to fight

at all, would fight for his rents, his leases, his houses, his monies, his oxen, his dinners, himself. Now your great man, your Robin, all England's Robin, fights not for himself but for the people of England. This John—this Norman tyranny—the stream is bearing us all down, and our little Sheriff will ever swim with the stream! but our great man, our Robin, against it. And how often in old histories have the great men striven against the stream, and how often in the long sweep of years to come must the great man strive against it again to save his country, and the liberties of his people! God bless our well-beloved Robin, Earl of Huntingdon.

SIR RICHARD.

Ay, ay. He wore thy colours once at a tourney. I am old and forget. Was Prince John there?

MARIAN.

The Sheriff of Nottingham was there—not John.

SIR RICHARD.

Beware of John and the Sheriff of Nottingham. They hunt in couples, and when they look at a maid they blast her.

MARIAN.

Then the maid is not high-hearted enough.

SIR RICHARD.

There—there—be not a fool again. Their aim is ever at that which flies highest—but O girl, girl, I am almost in despair. Those two thousand marks lent me by the Abbot for the ransom of my son Walter—I believed this Abbot of the party of King Richard, and he hath sold himself to that beast John—they must be paid in a year and a month, or I lose the land. There is one that should be grateful to me overseas, a Count in Brittany—he lives near Quimper. I saved his life once in battle. He has monies. I will go to him. I saved him. I will try him. I am all but sure of him. I will go to him.

MARIAN.

And I will follow thee, and God help us both.

SIR RICHARD.

Child, thou shouldst marry one who will pay the mortgage. This Robin, this Earl of Huntingdon—he is a friend of Richard—I know not, but he may save the land, he may save the land.

MARIAN (*showing a cross hung round her neck*).

Father, you see this cross?

SIR RICHARD.

Ay the King, thy godfather, gave it thee when a baby.

MARIAN.

And he said that whenever I married he would give me away, and on this cross I have sworn [*kisses it*] that till I myself pass away, there is no other man that shall give me away.

SIR RICHARD.

Lo there—thou art fool again—I am all as loyal as thyself, but what a vow! what a vow!

Re-enter LITTLE JOHN.

LITTLE JOHN.

My Lady Marian, your woman so flustered me that I forgot my message from the Earl. To-day he hath accomplished his thirtieth birthday, and he prays your ladyship and your ladyship's father to be present at his banquet to-night.

MARIAN.

Say, we will come.

LITTLE JOHN.

And I pray you, my lady, to stand between me and your woman, Kate.

MARIAN.

I will speak with her.

LITTLE JOHN.

I thank you, my lady, and I wish you and your ladyship's father a most exceedingly good morning.

[*Exit.*

SIR RICHARD.

Thou hast answered for me, but I know not if I will let thee go.

MARIAN.

I mean to go.

SIR RICHARD.

Not if I barred thee up in thy chamber, like a bird in a cage.

MARIAN.

Then I would drop from the casement, like a spider.

SIR RICHARD.

But I would hoist the drawbridge, like thy master.

MARIAN.

And I would swim the moat, like an otter.

SIR RICHARD.

But I would set my men-at-arms to oppose thee, like the Lord of the Castle.

MARIAN.

And I would break through them all, like the King of England.

SIR RICHARD.

Well, thou shalt go, but O the land! the land! my great great great grandfather, my great great grandfather, my great grandfather, my grandfather and my own father—they were born and bred on it—it was their mother—they have trodden it for half a thousand years, and whenever I set my own foot on it I say to it, Thou art mine, and it answers, I am thine to the very heart of the earth—but now I have lost my gold, I have lost my son, and I shall lose my land also. Down to the devil with this bond that beggars me! [*Flings down the bond.*

MARIAN.

Take it again, dear father, be not wroth at the dumb parchment. Sufficient for the day, dear father! let us be merry to-night at the banquet.

SCENE II.—*A banqueting-hall in the house of* ROBIN HOOD *the Earl of Huntingdon. Doors open into a banqueting-hall where he is at feast with his friends.*

DRINKING SONG.

Long live Richard,
Robin and Richard!
Long live Richard!
Down with John!
Drink to the Lion-heart
Every one!
Pledge the Plantagenet,
Him that is gone.
Who knows whither?
God's good Angel
Help him back hither,
And down with John!
Long live Robin,
Robin and Richard!
Long live Robin,
And down with John!

Enter PRINCE JOHN *disguised as a monk and the* SHERIFF OF NOTTINGHAM. *Cries of 'Down with John,' 'Long live King Richard,' 'Down with John.'*

PRINCE JOHN.

Down with John! ha. Shall I be known? is my disguise perfect?

SHERIFF.

Perfect—who should know you for Prince John, so that you keep the cowl down and speak not?

[*Shouts from the banquet-room.*

PRINCE JOHN.

Thou and I will still these revelries presently.

[*Shouts,* 'Long live King Richard!'

I come here to see this daughter of Sir Richard of the Lea and if her beauties answer their report. If so—

SHERIFF.

If so— [*Shouts,* 'Down with John!'

PRINCE JOHN.

You hear!

SHERIFF.

Yes, my lord, fear not. I will answer for you.

Enter LITTLE JOHN, SCARLET, MUCH, *&c., from the banquet singing a snatch of the Drinking Song.*

LITTLE JOHN.

I am a silent man myself, and all the more wonder at our Earl. What a wealth of words—O Lord, I will live and die for King Richard—not so much for the cause as for the Earl. O Lord, I am easily led by words, but I think the Earl hath right. Scarlet, hath not the Earl right? What makes thee so down in the mouth?

SCARLET.

I doubt not, I doubt not, and though I be down in the mouth, I will swear by the head of the Earl.

LITTLE JOHN.

Thou Much, miller's son, hath not the Earl right?

MUCH.

More water goes by the mill than the miller wots of, and more goes to make right than I know of, but for all that I will swear the Earl hath right. But they are coming hither for the dance—

Enter FRIAR TUCK.

be they not, Friar Tuck? Thou art the Earl's confessor and shouldst know.

TUCK.

Ay, ay, and but that I am a man of weight, and the weight of the church to boot on my shoulders, I would dance too. Fa, la, la, fa, la, la. [*Capering.*

MUCH.

But doth not the weight of the flesh at odd times overbalance the weight of the church, ha friar?

TUCK.

Homo sum. I love my dinner—but I can fast, I can fast; and as to other frailties of the flesh—out upon thee! Homo sum, sed virgo sum, I am a virgin, my masters, I am a virgin.

MUCH.

And a virgin, my masters, three yards about the waist is like to remain a virgin, for who could embrace such an armful of joy?

TUCK.

Knave, there is a lot of wild fellows in Sherwood Forest who hold by King Richard. If ever I meet thee there, I will break thy sconce with my quarter-staff.

Enter from the banqueting-hall SIR RICHARD LEA, ROBIN HOOD, *&c.*

ROBIN.

My guests and friends, Sir Richard, all of you
Who deign to honour this my thirtieth year,
And some of you were prophets that I might be,
Now that the sun our King is gone, the light
Of these dark hours; but this new moon, I fear,
Is darkness. Nay, this may be the last time
When I shall hold my birthday in this hall:
I may be outlaw'd, I have heard a rumour.

ALL.

God forbid!

ROBIN.

Nay, but we have no news of Richard yet,
And ye did wrong in crying 'Down with John;'
For be he dead, then John may be our King.

ALL.

God forbid!

ROBIN.

Ay God forbid,
But if it be so we must bear with John.

The man is able enough—no lack of wit,
And apt at arms and shrewd in policy.
Courteous enough too when he wills; and yet
I hate him for his want of chivalry.
He that can pluck the flower of maidenhood
From off the stalk and trample it in the mire,
And boast that he hath trampled it. I hate him,
I hate the man. I may not hate the King
For aught I know,
So that our Barons bring his baseness under.
I think they will be mightier than the king.

[*Dance music.*

(MARIAN *enters with other damsels.*)

ROBIN.

The high Heaven guard thee from his wantonness
Who art the fairest flower of maidenhood
That ever blossom'd on this English isle.

MARIAN.

Cloud not thy birthday with one fear for me.
My lord, myself and my good father pray
Thy thirtieth summer may be thirty-fold
As happy as any of those that went before.

ROBIN.

My Lady Marian you can make it so
If you will deign to tread a measure with me.

MARIAN.

Full willingly, my lord.

[*They dance.*

ROBIN (*after dance*).

My Lady, will you answer me a question?

MARIAN.

Any that you may ask.

ROBIN.

A question that every true man asks of a woman once in his life.

MARIAN.

I will not answer it, my lord, till King Richard come home again.

PRINCE JOHN (*to* SHERIFF).

How she looks up at him, how she holds her face!
Now if she kiss him, I will have his head.

SHERIFF.

Peace, my lord; the Earl and Sir Richard come this way.

ROBIN.

Must you have these monies before the year and the month end?

SIR RICHARD.

Or I forfeit my land to the Abbot. I must pass overseas to one that I trust will help me.

ROBIN.

Leaving your fair Marian alone here.

SIR RICHARD.

Ay, for she hath somewhat of the lioness in her, and there be men-at-arms to guard her.

[ROBIN, SIR RICHARD, *and* MARIAN *pass on.*

PRINCE JOHN (*to* SHERIFF).

Why that will be our opportunity
When I and thou will rob the nest of her.

SHERIFF.

Good Prince, art thou in need of any gold?

PRINCE JOHN.

Gold? why? not now.

SHERIFF.

I would give thee any gold
So that myself alone might rob the nest.

PRINCE JOHN.

Well, well then, thou shalt rob the nest alone.

SHERIFF.

Swear to me by that relic on thy neck.

PRINCE JOHN.

I swear then by this relic on my neck—
No, no, I will not swear by this; I keep it
For holy vows made to the blessed Saints
Not pleasures, women's matters.
Dost thou mistrust me? Am I not thy friend?
Beware, man, lest thou lose thy faith in me.
I love thee much; and as I *am* thy friend,
I promise thee to make this Marian thine.
Go now and ask the maid to dance with thee,
And learn from her if she do love this Earl.

SHERIFF (*advancing toward* MARIAN *and* ROBIN).

Pretty mistress!

ROBIN.

What art thou, man? Sheriff of Nottingham?

SHERIFF.

Ay, my lord. I and my friend, this monk, were here belated, and seeing the hospitable lights in your castle, and knowing the fame of your hospitality, we ventured in uninvited.

ROBIN.

You are welcome, though I fear you be of those who hold more by John than Richard.

SHERIFF.

True, for through John I had my sheriffship. I am John's till Richard come back again, and then I am Richard's. Pretty mistress, will you dance?

[*They dance.*

ROBIN (*talking to* PRINCE JOHN).

What monk of what convent art thou? Why wearest thou thy cowl to hide thy face?

[PRINCE JOHN *shakes his head.*

Is he deaf, or dumb, or daft, or drunk belike?

[PRINCE JOHN *shakes his head.*

Why comest thou like a death's head at my feast?

[PRINCE JOHN *points to the* SHERIFF, *who is dancing with* MARIAN.

Is he thy mouthpiece, thine interpreter?

[PRINCE JOHN *nods.*

SHERIFF (*to* MARIAN *as they pass*).

Beware of John!

MARIAN.

I hate him.

SHERIFF.

Would you cast
An eye of favour on me, I would pay
My brother all his debt and save the land.

MARIAN.

I cannot answer thee till Richard come.

SHERIFF.

And when he comes?

MARIAN.

Well, you must wait till then.

LITTLE JOHN (*dancing with* KATE).

Is it made up? Will you kiss me?

KATE.

You shall give me the first kiss.

LITTLE JOHN.

There (*kisses her*). Now thine.

KATE.

You shall wait for mine till Sir Richard has paid the Abbot. [*They pass on.*

[*The* SHERIFF *leaves* MARIAN *with her father and comes toward* ROBIN.

ROBIN (*to* SHERIFF, PRINCE JOHN *standing by*).

Sheriff, thy friend, this monk, is but a statue.

SHERIFF.

Pardon him, my lord: he is a holy Palmer, bounden by a vow not to show his face, nor to speak word to anyone, till he join King Richard in the Holy Land.

ROBIN.

Going to the Holy Land to Richard! Give me thy hand and tell him—— Why, what a cold grasp is thine—as if thou didst repent thy courtesy even in the doing it. That is no true man's hand. I hate hidden faces.

SHERIFF.

Pardon him again, I pray you; but the twilight of the coming day already glimmers in the east. We thank you, and farewell.

ROBIN.

Farewell, farewell. I hate hidden faces.

[*Exeunt* PRINCE JOHN *and* SHERIFF.

SIR RICHARD (*coming forward with* MAID MARIAN).

How close the Sheriff peer'd into thine eyes!
What did he say to thee?

MARIAN.

Bade me beware
Of John: what maid but would beware of John?

SIR RICHARD.

What else?

MARIAN.

I care not what he said.

SIR RICHARD.

What else?

MARIAN.

That if I cast an eye of favour on him,
Himself would pay this mortgage to his brother,
And save the land.

SIR RICHARD.

Did he say so, the Sheriff?

ROBIN.

I fear this Abbot is a heart of flint,
Hard as the stones of his abbey.
O good Sir Richard,
I am sorry my exchequer runs so low
I cannot help you in this exigency;
For though my men and I flash out at times
Of festival like burnish'd summer-flies,
We make but one hour's buzz, are only like
The rainbow of a momentary sun.
I am mortgaged as thyself.

SIR RICHARD.

Ay! I warrant thee—thou canst not be sorrier than I am. Come away, daughter.

ROBIN.

Farewell, Sir Richard; farewell, sweet Marian.

MARIAN.

Till better times.

ROBIN.

But if the better times should never come?

MARIAN.

Then I shall be no worse.

ROBIN.

And if the worst time come?

MARIAN.

Why then I will be better than the time.

ROBIN.

This ring my mother gave me: it was her own
Betrothal ring. She pray'd me when I loved
A maid with all my heart to pass it down
A finger of that hand which should be mine
Thereafter. Will you have it? Will you wear it?

MARIAN.

Ay, noble Earl, and never part with it.

SIR RICHARD LEA (*coming up*).

Not till she clean forget thee, noble Earl.

MARIAN.

Forget *him*—never—by this Holy Cross
Which good King Richard gave me when a child—
Never!

Not while the swallow skims along the ground,
And while the lark flies up and touches heaven!
Not while the smoke floats from the cottage roof,
And the white cloud is roll'd along the sky!
Not while the rivulet babbles by the door,
And the great breaker beats upon the beach!
Never—
Till Nature, high and low, and great and small
Forgets herself, and all her loves and hates
Sink again into chaos.

SIR RICHARD LEA.

Away! away!

[*Exeunt to music.*

SCENE III.—*Same as Scene II.*

ROBIN *and his men.*

ROBIN.

All gone!—my ring—I am happy—should be happy.
She took my ring. I trust she loves me—yet
I heard this Sheriff tell her he would pay
The mortgage if she favour'd him. I fear
Not her, the father's power upon her.
Friends, (*to his men*)
I am only merry for an hour or two

Upon a birthday: if this life of ours
Be a good glad thing, why should we make us merry
Because a year of it is gone? but Hope
Smiles from the threshold of the year to come
Whispering 'it will be happier,' and old faces
Press round us, and warm hands close with warm hands,
And thro' the blood the wine leaps to the brain
Like April sap to the topmost tree, that shoots
New buds to heaven, whereon the throstle rock'd
Sings a new song to the new year—and you
Strike up a song, my friends, and then to bed.

LITTLE JOHN.

What will you have, my lord?

ROBIN.

'To sleep! to sleep!'

LITTLE JOHN.

There is a touch of sadness in it, my lord,
But ill befitting such a festal day.

ROBIN.

I have a touch of sadness in myself.
Sing.

SONG.

To sleep! to sleep! The long bright day is done,
And darkness rises from the fallen sun.
To sleep! to sleep!
What'er thy joys, they vanish with the day;
What'er thy griefs, in sleep they fade away.
To sleep! to sleep!
Sleep, mournful heart, and let the past be past!
Sleep, happy soul! all life will sleep at last.
To sleep! to sleep!

[*A trumpet blown at the gates.*

ROBIN.

Who breaks the stillness of the morning thus?

LITTLE JOHN (*going out and returning*).

It is a royal messenger, my lord:
I trust he brings us news of the King's coming.

Enter a PURSUIVANT *who reads.*

O yes, O yes, O yes! In the name of the Regent. Thou, Robin Hood Earl of Huntingdon art attainted and hast lost thine earldom of Huntingdon. Moreover thou art dispossessed of all thy lands, goods, and chattels; and by virtue of this writ, whereas

Robin Hood Earl of Huntingdon by force and arms hath trespassed against the king in divers manners, therefore by the judgment of the officers of the said lord king, according to the law and custom of the kingdom of England Robin Hood Earl of Huntingdon is outlawed and banished.

ROBIN.

I have shelter'd some that broke the forest laws.
This is irregular and the work of John.
['Irregular, irregular! (*tumult*) Down with
him, tear his coat from his back!'

MESSENGER.

Ho there! ho there, the Sheriff's men without!

ROBIN.

Nay, let them be, man, let them be. We yield.
How should we cope with John? The London
folkmote
Has made him all but king, and he hath seized
On half the royal castles. Let him alone! (*to his men*)
A worthy messenger! how should he help it?
Shall *we* too work injustice? what, thou shakest!
Here, here—a cup of wine—drink and begone!
[*Exit* MESSENGER.

We will away in four-and-twenty hours,
But shall we leave our England?

TUCK.

Robin, Earl—

ROBIN.

Let be the Earl. Henceforth I am no more
Than plain man to plain man.

TUCK.

Well, then, plain man,
There be good fellows there in merry Sherwood
That hold by Richard, tho' they kill his deer.

ROBIN.

In Sherwood Forest. I have heard of them.
Have they no leader?

TUCK.

Each man for his own.
Be thou their leader and they will all of them
Swarm to thy voice like bees to the brass pan.

ROBIN.

They hold by Richard—the wild wood! to cast
All threadbare household habit, mix with all

The lusty life of wood and underwood,
Hawk, buzzard, jay, the mavis and the merle,
The tawny squirrel vaulting thro' the boughs,
The deer, the highback'd polecat, the wild boar,
The burrowing badger—By St. Nicholas
I have a sudden passion for the wild wood—
We should be free as air in the wild wood—
What say you? shall we go? Your hands, your hands!
[*Gives his hand to each.*
You, Scarlet, you are always moody here.

SCARLET.

'Tis for no lack of love to you, my lord,
But lack of happiness in a blatant wife.
She broke my head on Tuesday with a dish.
I would have thwack'd the woman, but I did not,
Because thou sayest such fine things of women,
But I shall have to thwack her if I stay.

ROBIN.

Would it be better for thee in the wood?

SCARLET.

Ay, so she did not follow me to the wood.

ROBIN.

Then, Scarlet, thou at least wilt go with me.
Thou, Much, the miller's son, I knew thy father:

He was a manly man, as thou art, Much,
And gray before his time as thou art, Much.

MUCH.

It is the trick of the family, my lord.
There was a song he made to the turning wheel—

ROBIN.

'Turn! turn!' but I forget it.

MUCH.

I can sing it.

ROBIN.

Not now, good Much! And thou, dear Little John,
Who hast that worship for me which Heaven knows
I ill deserve—you love me, all of you,
But I am outlaw'd, and if caught, I die.
Your hands again. All thanks for all your service;
But if you follow me, you may die with me.

ALL.

We will live and die with thee, we will live and die with thee.

END OF ACT I.

ACT II

THE FLIGHT OF MARIAN

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*A broad forest glade, woodman's hut at one side with half-door,* FORESTERS *are looking to their bows and arrows, or polishing their swords.*

FORESTERS *sing* (*as they disperse to their work*).

There is no land like England
Where'er the light of day be;
There are no hearts like English hearts
Such hearts of oak as they be.
There is no land like England
Where'er the light of day be;
There are no men like Englishmen
So tall and bold as they be.

(Full chorus.) *And these will strike for England*
And man and maid be free
To foil and spoil the tyrant
Beneath the greenwood tree.

There is no land like England
Where'er the light of day be;
There are no wives like English wives
So fair and chaste as they be.
There is no land like England
Where'er the light of day be;
There are no maids like English maids
So beautiful as they be.

(Full chorus.) *And these shall wed with freemen,*
And all their sons be free,
To sing the songs of England
Beneath the greenwood tree.

ROBIN (*alone*).

My lonely hour!
The king of day hath stept from off his throne,
Flung by the golden mantle of the cloud,
And sets, a naked fire. The King of England
Perchance this day may sink as gloriously,

Red with his own and enemy's blood—but no !
We hear he is in prison. It is my birthday.
I have reign'd one year in the wild wood. My mother,
For whose sake, and the blessed Queen of Heaven,
I reverence all women, bad me, dying,
Whene'er this day should come about, to carve
One lone hour from it, so to meditate
Upon my greater nearness to the birthday
Of the after-life, when all the sheeted dead
Are shaken from their stillness in the grave
By the last trumpet.
Am I worse or better?
I am outlaw'd. I am none the worse for that.
I held for Richard, and I hated John.
I am a thief, ay, and a king of thieves.
Ay ! but we rob the robber, wrong the wronger,
And what we wring from them we give the poor.
I am none the worse for that, and all the better
For this free forest-life, for while I sat
Among my thralls in my baronial hall
The groining hid the heavens ; but since I breathed,
A houseless head beneath the sun and stars,
The soul of the woods hath stricken thro' my blood,
The love of freedom, the desire of God,
The hope of larger life hereafter, more
Tenfold than under roof. [*Horn blown.*
True, were I taken

They would prick out my sight. A price is set
On this poor head; but I believe there lives
No man who truly loves and truly rules
His following, but can keep his followers true.
I am one with mine. Traitors are rarely bred
Save under traitor kings. Our vice-king John,
True king of vice—true play on words—our John
By his Norman arrogance and dissoluteness,
Hath made *me* king of all the discontent
Of England up thro' all the forest land
North to the Tyne: being outlaw'd in a land
Where law lies dead, we make ourselves the law.
Why break you thus upon my lonely hour?

Enter LITTLE JOHN *and* KATE.

LITTLE JOHN.

I found this white doe wandering thro' the wood,
Not thine, but mine. I have shot her thro' the heart

KATE.

He lies, my lord. I have shot *him* thro' the heart.

ROBIN.

My God, thou art the very woman who waits
On my dear Marian. Tell me, tell me of her.
Thou comest a very angel out of heaven.
Where is she? and how fares she?

KATE.

O my good lord,
I am but an angel by reflected light.
Your heaven is vacant of your angel. John—
Shame on him !—
Stole on her, she was walking in the garden,
And after some slight speech about the Sheriff
He caught her round the waist, whereon she struck him,
And fled into the castle. She and Sir Richard
Have past away, I know not where ; and I
Was left alone, and knowing as I did
That I had shot him thro' the heart, I came
To eat him up and make an end of him.

LITTLE JOHN.

In kisses?

KATE.

You, how dare you mention kisses?
But I am weary pacing thro' the wood.
Show me some cave or cabin where I may rest.

ROBIN.

Go with him. I will talk with thee anon.

[*Exeunt* LITTLE JOHN *and* KATE.

She struck him, my brave Marian, struck the Prince,
The serpent that had crept into the garden

And coil'd himself about her sacred waist.
I think I should have stricken him to the death.
He never will forgive her.
O the Sheriff
Would pay this cursed mortgage to his brother
If Marian would marry him; and the son
Is most like dead—if so the land may come
To Marian, and they rate the land five-fold
The worth of the mortgage, and who marries her
Marries the land. Most honourable Sheriff!
(*Passionately*) Gone, and it may be gone for evermore!
O would that I could see her for a moment
Glide like a light across these woodland ways!
Tho' in one moment she should glance away,
I should be happier for it all the year.
O would she moved beside me like my shadow!
O would she stood before me as my queen,
To make this Sherwood Eden o'er again,
And these rough oaks the palms of Paradise!

Ah! but who be those three yonder with bows?—not of my band—the Sheriff, and by heaven, Prince John himself and one of those mercenaries that suck the blood of England. My people are all scattered I know not where. Have they come for me? Here is the witch's hut. The fool-people call her a witch—a good witch to me! I will shelter here.

[*Knocks at the door of the hut.*

OLD WOMAN *comes out.*

OLD WOMAN (*kisses his hand*).

Ah dear Robin! ah noble captain, friend of the poor!

ROBIN.

I am chased by my foes. I have forgotten my horn that calls my men together. Disguise me—thy gown and thy coif.

OLD WOMAN.

Come in, come in; I would give my life for thee, for when the Sheriff had taken all our goods for the King without paying, our horse and our little cart——

ROBIN.

Quick, good mother, quick!

OLD WOMAN.

Ay, ay, gown, coif, and petticoat, and the old woman's blessing with them to the last fringe.

[*They go in.*

Enter PRINCE JOHN, SHERIFF OF NOTTINGHAM, *and* MERCENARY.

PRINCE JOHN.

Did we not hear the two would pass this way?
They must have past. Here is a woodman's hut.

MERCENARY.

Take heed, take heed! in Nottingham they say
There bides a foul witch somewhere hereabout.

SHERIFF.

Not in this hut I take it.

PRINCE JOHN.

Why not here?

SHERIFF.

I saw a man go in, my lord.

PRINCE JOHN.

Not two?

SHERIFF.

No, my lord, one.

PRINCE JOHN.

Make for the cottage then!

Interior of the hut.

ROBIN *disguised as old woman.*

PRINCE JOHN (*without*).

Knock again! knock again!

ROBIN (*to* OLD WOMAN).

Get thee into the closet there, and make a ghostly wail ever and anon to scare 'em.

OLD WOMAN.

I will, I will, good Robin. [*Goes into closet.*

PRINCE JOHN (*without*).

Open, open, or I will drive the door from the doorpost.

ROBIN (*opens door*).

Come in, come in.

PRINCE JOHN.

Why did ye keep us at the door so long?

ROBIN (*curtseying*).

I was afear'd it was the ghost, your worship.

PRINCE JOHN.

Ghost! did one in white pass?

ROBIN (*curtseying*).

No, your worship.

PRINCE JOHN.

Did two knights pass?

ROBIN (*curtseying*).

No, your worship.

SHERIFF.

I fear me we have lost our labour, then.

PRINCE JOHN.

Except this old hag have been bribed to lie.

ROBIN.

We old hags should be bribed to speak truth, for, God help us, we lie by nature.

PRINCE JOHN.

There was a man just now that enter'd here?

ROBIN.

There is but one old woman in the hut.

[OLD WOMAN *yells.*

ROBIN.

I crave your worship's pardon. There is yet another old woman. She was murdered here a hundred year ago, and whenever a murder is to be done again she yells out i' this way—so they say, your worship.

MERCENARY.

Now, if I hadn't a sprig o' wickentree sewn into my dress, I should run.

PRINCE JOHN.

Tut! tut! the scream of some wild woodland thing.
How came we to be parted from our men?
We shouted, and *they* shouted, as I thought,
But shout and echo play'd into each other
So hollowly we knew not which was which.

ROBIN.

The wood is full of echoes, owls, elfs, ouphes, oafs, ghosts o' the mist, wills-o'-the-wisp; only they that be bred in it can find their way a-nights in it.

PRINCE JOHN.

I am footsore and famish'd therewithal.
Is there aught there? [*Pointing to cupboard.*

ROBIN.

Naught for the likes o' you.

PRINCE JOHN.

Speak straight out, crookback.

ROBIN.

Sour milk and black bread.

PRINCE JOHN.

Well, set them forth. I could eat anything.

[*He sets out a table with black bread.*

This is mere marble. Old hag, how should thy one tooth drill thro' this?

ROBIN.

Nay, by St. Gemini, I ha' two; and since the Sheriff left me naught but an empty belly, they can meet upon anything thro' a millstone. You gentles that live upo' manchet-bread and marchpane, what should you know o' the food o' the poor? Look you here, before you can eat it you must hack it with a hatchet, break it all to pieces, as you break the poor, as you would hack at Robin Hood if you could light upon him (*hacks it and flings two pieces*). There's for you, and there's for you—and the old woman's welcome.

PRINCE JOHN.

The old wretch is mad, and her bread is beyond me: and the milk—faugh! Hast thou anything to sweeten this?

ROBIN.

Here's a pot o' wild honey from an old oak, saving your sweet reverences.

SHERIFF.

Thou hast a cow then, hast thou?

ROBIN.

Ay, for when the Sheriff took my little horse for the King without paying for it——

SHERIFF.

How hadst thou then the means to buy a cow?

ROBIN.

Eh, I would ha' given my whole body to the King had *he* asked for it, like the woman at Acre when the Turk shot her as she was helping to build the mound against the city. I ha' served the King living, says she, and let me serve him dead, says she; let me go to make the mound: bury me in the mound, says the woman.

SHERIFF.

Ay, but the cow?

ROBIN.

She was given me.

SHERIFF.

By whom?

ROBIN.

By a thief.

SHERIFF.

Who, woman, who?

ROBIN (*sings*).

He was a forester good;
He was the cock o' the walk;
He was the king o' the wood.

Your worship may find another rhyme if you care to drag your brains for such a minnow.

SHERIFF.

That cow was mine. I have lost a cow from my meadow. Robin Hood was it? I thought as much. He will come to the gibbet at last.

[OLD WOMAN *yells*.

MERCENARY.

O sweet sir, talk not of cows. You anger the spirit.

PRINCE JOHN.

Anger the scritch-owl.

MERCENARY.

But, my lord, the scritch-owl bodes death, my lord.

ROBIN.

I beseech you all to speak lower. Robin may be hard by wi' three-score of his men. He often looks in here by the moonshine. Beware of Robin.

[OLD WOMAN *yells.*

MERCENARY.

Ah, do you hear? There may be murder done.

SHERIFF.

Have you not finished, my lord?

ROBIN.

Thou hast crost him in love, and I have heard him swear he will be even wi' thee.

[OLD WOMAN *yells.*

MERCENARY.

Now is my heart so down in my heels that if I stay, I can't run.

SHERIFF.

Shall we not go?

ROBIN.

And, old hag tho' I be, I can spell the hand. Give me thine. Ay, ay, the line o' life is marked enow; but look, there is a cross line o' sudden death.

I pray thee go, go, for tho' thou wouldst bar me fro' the milk o' my cow, I wouldn't have thy blood on my hearth.

PRINCE JOHN.

Why do you listen, man, to the old fool?

SHERIFF.

I will give thee a silver penny if thou wilt show us the way back to Nottingham.

ROBIN (*with a very low curtsey*).

All the sweet saints bless your worship for your alms to the old woman! but make haste then, and be silent in the wood. Follow me.

[*Takes his bow.*

(*They come out of the hut and close the door carefully.*)

Outside hut.

ROBIN.

Softly! softly! there may be a thief in every bush.

PRINCE JOHN.

How should this old lamester guide us? Where is thy goodman?

ROBIN.

The saints were so kind to both on us that he was dead before he was born.

PRINCE JOHN.

Half-witted and a witch to boot! Mislead us, and I will have thy life! and what doest thou with that who art more bow-bent than the very bow thou carriest?

ROBIN.

I keep it to kill nightingales.

PRINCE JOHN.

Nightingales!

ROBIN.

You see, they are so fond o' their own voices that I cannot sleep o' nights by cause on 'em.

PRINCE JOHN.

True soul of the Saxon churl for whom song has no charm.

ROBIN.

Then I roast 'em, for I have nought else to live on (*whines*). O your honour, I pray you too to give me an alms. (*To* PRINCE JOHN.)

SHERIFF.

This is no bow to hit nightingales; this is a true woodman's bow of the best yew-wood to slay the deer. Look, my lord, there goes one in the moonlight. Shoot!

PRINCE JOHN (*shoots*).

Missed! There goes another. Shoot, Sheriff!

SHERIFF (*shoots*).

Missed!

ROBIN.

And here comes another. Why, an old woman can shoot closer than you two.

PRINCE JOHN.

Shoot then, and if thou miss I will fasten thee to thine own doorpost and make thine old carcase a target for us three.

ROBIN (*raises himself upright, shoots, and hits*).

Hit! Did I not tell you an old woman could shoot better?

PRINCE JOHN.

Thou standest straight. Thou speakest manlike. Thou art no old woman—thou art disguised—thou art one of the thieves.

[*Makes a clutch at the gown, which comes in pieces and falls, showing* ROBIN *in his forester's dress.*

SHERIFF.

It is the very captain of the thieves!

PRINCE JOHN.

We have him at last; we have him at advantage. Strike, Sheriff! Strike, mercenary!

[*They draw swords and attack him; he defends himself with his.*

Enter LITTLE JOHN.

LITTLE JOHN.

I have lodged my pretty Katekin in her bower.

How now? Clashing of swords—three upon one, and that one our Robin! Rogues, have you no manhood? [*Draws and defends* ROBIN.

Enter SIR RICHARD LEA (*draws his sword*).

SIR RICHARD LEA.

Old as I am, I will not brook to see
Three upon two.

(MAID MARIAN *in the armour of a Red-cross Knight follows half unsheathing her sword and half seen.*)

Back! back! I charge thee, back!
Is this a game for thee to play at? Away.

(*She retires to the fringe of the copse.*)

[*He fights on* ROBIN'S *side. The other three are beaten off and exeunt.*

Enter FRIAR TUCK.

FRIAR TUCK.

I am too late then with my quarterstaff!

ROBIN.

Quick, friar, follow them:
See whether there be more of 'em in the wood.

FRIAR TUCK.

On the gallop, on the gallop, Robin, like a deer from a dog, or a colt from a gad-fly, or a stump-tailed ox in May-time, or the cow that jumped over the moon. [*Exit.*

ROBIN.

Nay, nay, but softly, lest they spy thee, friar!

[*To* SIR RICHARD LEA *who reels.*

Take thou mine arm. Who art thou, gallant knight?

SIR RICHARD.

Robin, I am Sir Richard of the Lea.
Who be those three that I have fought withal?

ROBIN.

Prince John, the Sheriff, and a mercenary.

SIR RICHARD.

Prince John again. We are flying from this John.
The Sheriff—I am grieved it was the Sheriff;
For, Robin, he must be my son-in-law.
Thou art an outlaw, and couldst never pay
The mortgage on my land. Thou wilt not see
My Marian more. So—so—I have presumed
Beyond my strength. Give me a draught of wine.

[MARIAN *comes forward.*

This is my son but late escaped from prison,
For whom I ran into my debt to the Abbot,
Two thousand marks in gold. I have paid him half.
That other thousand—shall I ever pay it?
A draught of wine.

ROBIN.

Our cellar is hard by.
Take him, good Little John, and give him wine.

[*Exit* SIR RICHARD *leaning on* LITTLE JOHN.

A brave old fellow but he angers me.

[*To* MAID MARIAN *who is following her father.*

Young Walter, nay, I pray thee, stay a moment.

MARIAN.

A moment for some matter of no moment!
Well—! take and use your moment, while you may.

ROBIN.

Thou art her brother, and her voice is thine,
Her face is thine, and if thou be as gentle
Give me some news of my sweet Marian.
Where is she?

MARIAN.

Thy sweet Marian? I believe
She came with me into the forest here.

ROBIN.

She follow'd thee into the forest here?

MARIAN.

Nay—that, my friend, I am sure I did not say.

ROBIN.

Thou blowest hot and cold. Where is she then?

MARIAN.

Is she not here with thee?.

ROBIN.

Would God she were!

MARIAN.

If not with thee I know not where she is.
She may have lighted on your fairies here,
And now be skipping in their fairy-rings,
And capering hand in hand with Oberon.

ROBIN.

Peace!

MARIAN.

Or learning witchcraft of your woodland witch
And how to charm and waste the hearts of men.

ROBIN.

That is not brother-like.

MARIAN (*pointing to the sky*).

Or there perchance
Up yonder with the man i' the moon.

ROBIN.

No more!

MARIAN.

Or haply fallen a victim to the wolf.

ROBIN.

Tut! be there wolves in Sherwood?

MARIAN.

The wolf, John!

ROBIN.

Curse him! but thou art mocking me. Thou art
Her brother—I forgive thee. Come be thou
My brother too. She loves me.

MARIAN.

Doth she so?

ROBIN.

Do you doubt me when I say she loves me, man?

MARIAN.

No, but my father will not lose his land,
Rather than that would wed her with the Sheriff.

ROBIN.

Thou hold'st with him?

MARIAN.

Yes, in some sort I do.
He is old and almost mad to keep the land.

ROBIN.

Thou hold'st with him?

MARIAN.

I tell thee, in some sort.

ROBIN (*angrily*).

Sort! sort! what sort? what sort of man art thou
For land, not love? Thou wilt inherit the land,
And so wouldst sell thy sister to the Sheriff,

O thou unworthy brother of my dear Marian!
And now, I do bethink me, thou wast by
And never drewest sword to help the old man
When he was fighting.

MARIAN.

There were three to three.

ROBIN.

Thou shouldst have ta'en his place, and fought for him.

MARIAN.

He did it so well there was no call for me.

ROBIN.

My God!
That such a brother—*she* marry the Sheriff!
Come now, I fain would have a bout with thee.
It is but pastime—nay, I will not harm thee.
Draw!

MARIAN.

Earl, I would fight with any man but thee.

ROBIN.

Ay, ay, because I have a name for prowess.

MARIAN.

It is not that.

ROBIN.

That! I believe thou fell'st into the hands
Of these same Moors thro' nature's baseness, criedst
'I yield' almost before the thing was ask'd,
And thro' thy lack of manhood hast betray'd
Thy father to the losing of his land.
Come, boy! 'tis but to see if thou canst fence.
Draw! [*Draws.*

MARIAN.

No, Sir Earl, I will not fight to-day.

ROBIN.

To-morrow then?

MARIAN.

Well, I will fight to-morrow.

ROBIN.

Give me thy glove upon it.

MARIAN (*pulls off her glove and gives it to him*).

There!

ROBIN.

O God!
What sparkles in the moonlight on thy hand?
[*Takes her hand.*

In that great heat to wed her to the Sheriff
Thou hast robb'd my girl of her betrothal ring.

MARIAN.

No, no!

ROBIN.

What! do I not know mine own ring?

MARIAN.

I keep it for her.

ROBIN.

Nay, she swore it never
Should leave her finger. Give it me, by heaven,
Or I will force it from thee.

MARIAN.

O Robin, Robin!

ROBIN.

O my dear Marian,
Is it thou? is it thou? I fall before thee, clasp
Thy knees. I am ashamed. Thou shalt not marry
The Sheriff, but abide with me who love thee.
[*She moves from him, the moonlight falls upon her.*
O look! before the shadow of these dark oaks
Thou seem'st a saintly splendour out from heaven,

Clothed with the mystic silver of her moon.
Speak but one word not only of forgiveness,
But to show thou art mortal.

MARIAN.

Mortal enough,
If love for thee be mortal. Lovers hold
True love immortal. Robin, tho' I love thee,
We cannot come together in this world.
Not mortal! after death, if after death——

ROBIN.

Life, life. I know not death. Why do you vex me
With raven-croaks of death and after death?

MARIAN.

And I and he are passing overseas:
He has a friend there will advance the monies,
So now the forest lawns are all as bright
As ways to heaven, I pray thee give us guides
To lead us thro' the windings of the wood.

ROBIN.

Must it be so? If it were so, myself
Would guide you thro' the forest to the sea.
But go not yet, stay with us, and when thy brother——

MARIAN.

Robin, I ever held that saying false
That Love is blind, but thou hast proven it true.
Why—even your woodland squirrel sees the nut
Behind the shell, and thee however mask'd
I should have known. But thou—to dream that he
My brother, my dear Walter—now, perhaps,
Fetter'd and lash'd, a galley-slave, or closed
For ever in a Moorish tower, or wreckt
And dead beneath the midland ocean, he
As gentle as he's brave—that such as he
Would wrest from me the precious ring I promised
Never to part with—No, not he, nor any.
I would have battled for it to the death.
[*In her excitement she draws her sword.*
See, thou hast wrong'd my brother and myself.

ROBIN (*kneeling*).

See then, I kneel once more to be forgiven.

Enter SCARLET, MUCH, *several of the* FORESTERS, *rushing on.*

SCARLET.

Look ! look ! he kneels ! he has anger'd the foul witch,
Who melts a waxen image by the fire,
And drains the heart and marrow from a man.

MUCH.

Our Robin beaten, pleading for his life!
Seize on the knight! wrench his sword from him!

[*They all rush on* MARIAN.

ROBIN (*springing up and waving his hand*).

Back!

Back all of you! this is Maid Marian
Flying from John—disguised.

MEN.

Maid Marian? she?

SCARLET.

Captain, we saw thee cowering to a knight
And thought thou wert bewitch'd.

MARIAN.

You dared to dream
That our great Earl, the bravest English heart
Since Hereward the Wake, would cower to any
Of mortal build. Weak natures that impute
Themselves to their unlikes, and their own want
Of manhood to their leader! he would break,
Far as he might, the power of John—but you—
What rightful cause could grow to such a heat
As burns a wrong to ashes, if the followers

Of him, who heads the movement, held him craven?
Robin—I know not, can I trust myself
With your brave band? in some of these may lodge
That baseness which for fear or monies, might
Betray me to the wild Prince.

ROBIN.

No, love, no!
Not any of these, I swear.

MEN.

No, no, we swear.

SCENE II.—*Another Glade in the Forest.*

ROBIN *and* MARIAN *passing.* *Enter* FORESTER.

FORESTER.

Knight, your good father had his draught of wine
And then he swoon'd away. He had been hurt,
And bled beneath his armour. Now he cries
'The land! the land!' Come to him.

MARIAN.

O my poor father!

ROBIN.

Stay with us in this wood, till he recover.
We know all balms and simples of the field
To help a wound. Stay with us here, sweet love,
Maid Marian, till thou wed what man thou wilt.
All here will prize thee, honour, worship thee,
Crown thee with flowers; and he will soon be well:
All will be well.

MARIAN.

O lead me to my father!

[*As they are going out enter* LITTLE JOHN *and* KATE *who falls on the neck of* MARIAN.

KATE.

No, no, false knight, thou canst not hide thyself
From her who loves thee.

LITTLE JOHN.

What!
By all the devils in and out of Hell!
Wilt thou embrace thy sweetheart 'fore my face?
Quick with thy sword! the yeoman braves the knight.
There! (*strikes her with the flat of his sword*).

MARIAN (*laying about her*).

Are the men all mad? there then, and there!

KATE.

O hold thy hand! this is our Marian.

LITTLE JOHN.

What! with this skill of fence! let go mine arm.

ROBIN.

Down with thy sword! She is my queen and thine,
The mistress of the band.

MARIAN (*sheathing her sword*).

A maiden now
Were ill-bested in these dark days of John,
Except she could defend her innocence.
O lead me to my father.

[*Exeunt* ROBIN *and* MARIAN.

LITTLE JOHN.

Speak to me,
I am like a boy now going to be whipt;
I know I have done amiss, have been a fool,
Speak to me, Kate, and say you pardon me!

KATE.

I never will speak word to thee again.
What? to mistrust the girl you say you love

Is to mistrust your own love for your girl!
How should you love if you mistrust your love?

LITTLE JOHN.

O Kate, true love and jealousy are twins,
And love is joyful, innocent, beautiful,
And jealousy is wither'd, sour and ugly:
Yet are they twins and always go together.

KATE.

Well, well, until they cease to go together,
I am but a stone and a dead stock to thee.

LITTLE JOHN.

I thought I saw thee clasp and kiss a man
And it was but a woman. Pardon me.

KATE.

Ay, for I much disdain thee, but if ever
Thou see me clasp and kiss a man indeed,
I will again be thine, and not till then. [*Exit.*

LITTLE JOHN.

I have been a fool and I have lost my Kate. [*Exit.*

Re-enter ROBIN.

ROBIN.

He dozes. I have left her watching him.
She will not marry till her father yield.
The old man dotes.
Nay—and she will not marry till Richard come,
And that's at latter Lammas—never perhaps.
Besides, tho' Friar Tuck might make us one,
An outlaw's bride may not be wife in law.
I am weary. [*Lying down on a bank.*
What's here? a dead bat in the fairy ring—
Yes, I remember, Scarlet hacking down
A hollow ash, a bat flew out at him
In the clear noon, and hook'd him by the hair,
And he was scared and slew it. My men say
The fairies haunt this glade;—if one could catch
A glimpse of them and of their fairy Queen—
Have our loud pastimes driven them all away?
I never saw them: yet I could believe
There came some evil fairy at my birth
And cursed me, as the last heir of my race:
'This boy will never wed the maid he loves,
Nor leave a child behind him' (*yawns*). Weary—
weary
As tho' a spell were on me (*he dreams*).

[*The whole stage lights up, and fairies are seen swinging on boughs and nestling in hollow trunks.*

TITANIA *on a hill.* FAIRIES *on either side of her.*
The moon above the hill.

FIRST FAIRY.

Evil fairy! do you hear?
So he said who lieth here.

SECOND FAIRY.

We be fairies of the wood,
We be neither bad nor good.

FIRST FAIRY.

Back and side and hip and rib,
Nip, nip him for his fib.

TITANIA.

Nip him not, but let him snore.
We must flit for evermore.

FIRST FAIRY.

Tit, my queen, must it be so?
Wherefore, wherefore should we go?

TITANIA.

I Titania bid you flit,
And you dare to call me Tit.

FIRST FAIRY.

Tit, for love and brevity,
Not for love of levity.

TITANIA.

Pertest of our flickering mob,
Wouldst thou call my Oberon Ob?

FIRST FAIRY.

Nay, an please your Elfin Grace,
Never Ob before his face.

TITANIA.

Fairy realm is breaking down
When the fairy slights the crown.

FIRST FAIRY.

No, by wisp and glowworm, no.
Only wherefore should we go?

TITANIA.

We must fly from Robin Hood
And this new queen of the wood.

FIRST FAIRY.

True, she is a goodly thing.
Jealousy, jealousy of the king.

TITANIA.

Nay, for Oberon fled away
Twenty thousand leagues to-day.

CHORUS.

Look, there comes a deputation
From our finikin fairy nation.

Enter several FAIRIES.

THIRD FAIRY.

Crush'd my bat whereon I flew.
Found him dead and drench'd in dew,
Queen.

FOURTH FAIRY.

Quash'd my frog that used to quack
When I vaulted on his back,
Queen.

FIFTH FAIRY.

Kill'd the sward where'er they sat,
Queen.

SIXTH FAIRY.

Lusty bracken beaten flat,
Queen.

SEVENTH FAIRY.

Honest daisy deadly bruised,
Queen.

EIGHTH FAIRY.

Modest maiden lily abused,
Queen.

NINTH FAIRY.

Beetle's jewel armour crack'd,
Queen.

TENTH FAIRY.

Reed I rock'd upon broken-back'd,
Queen.

FAIRIES (*in chorus*).

We be scared with song and shout.
Arrows whistle all about.
All our games be put to rout.
All our rings be trampled out.
Lead us thou to some deep glen,
Far from solid foot of men,
Never to return again,
Queen.

TITANIA (*to* FIRST FAIRY).

Elf, with spiteful heart and eye,
Talk of jealousy? You see why
We must leave the wood and fly.

(To all the fairies who sing at intervals with TITANIA.)

Up with you, out of the forest and over the hills and away,
And over this Robin Hood's bay!
Up thro' the light of the seas by the moon's long-silvering ray!
To a land where the fay,
Not an eye to survey,
In the night, in the day,
Can have frolic and play.
Up with you, all of you, out of it! hear and obey.
Man, lying here alone,
Moody creature,
Of a nature
Stronger, sadder than my own,
Were I human, were I human,
I could love you like a woman.
Man, man,
You shall wed your Marian.
She is true, and you are true,

And you love her and she loves you ;
Both be happy, and adieu for ever and for evermore—
adieu.

ROBIN (*half waking*).

Shall I be happy? Happy vision, stay.

TITANIA.

Up with you, all of you, off with you, out of it, over the wood and away!

END OF ACT II.

Note.—In the stage copy of my play I have had this Fairy Scene transferred to the end of the Third Act, for the sake of modern dramatic effect.

ACT III

THE CROWNING OF MARIAN

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*Heart of the forest.*

MARIAN *and* KATE (*in Foresters' green*).

KATE.

What makes you seem so cold to Robin, lady ?

MARIAN.

What makes thee think I seem so cold to Robin ?

KATE.

You never whisper close as lovers do,
Nor care to leap into each other's arms.

MARIAN.

There is a fence I cannot overleap,
My father's will.

KATE.

Then you will wed the Sheriff?

MARIAN.

When heaven falls, I may light on such a lark!
But who art thou to catechize me—thou
That hast not made it up with Little John!

KATE.

I wait till Little John makes up to *me*.

MARIAN.

Why, my good Robin fancied me a man,
And drew his sword upon me, and Little John
Fancied he saw thee clasp and kiss a man.

KATE.

Well, if *he* fancied that *I* fancy a man
Other than *him*, he is *not* the man for me.

MARIAN.

And that would quite *un*man him, heart and soul.
For both are thine.

(*Looking up.*)

But listen—overhead—

Fluting, and piping and luting 'Love, love, love'—
Those sweet tree-Cupids half-way up in heaven,
The birds—would I were one of 'em! O good Kate—
If my man-Robin were but a bird-Robin,
How happily would we lilt among the leaves
'Love, love, love, love'—what merry madness—listen!
And let them warm thy heart to Little John.
Look where he comes!

KATE.

I will not meet him yet,
I'll watch him from behind the trees, but call
Kate when you will, for I am close at hand.

KATE *stands aside and enter* ROBIN, *and after him at a little distance* LITTLE JOHN, MUCH *the Miller's son, and* SCARLET *with an oaken chaplet, and other* FORESTERS.

LITTLE JOHN.

My lord—Robin—I crave pardon—you always seem to me my lord—I Little John, he Much the miller's son, and he Scarlet, honouring all womankind, and more especially my lady Marian, do here, in the name of all our woodmen, present her with this oaken chaplet as Queen of the wood, I Little John,

he, young Scarlet, and he, old Much, and all the rest of us.

MUCH.

And I, old Much, say as much, for being every inch a man I honour every inch of a woman.

ROBIN.

Friend Scarlet, art thou less a man than Much?
Why art thou mute? Dost thou not honour woman?

SCARLET.

Robin, I do, but I have a bad wife.

ROBIN.

Then let her pass as an exception, Scarlet.

SCARLET.

So I would, Robin, if any man would accept her.

MARIAN (*puts on the chaplet*).

Had I a bulrush now in this right hand
For sceptre, I were like a queen indeed.
Comrades, I thank you for your loyalty,
And take and wear this symbol of your love;
And were my kindly father sound again,
Could live as happy as the larks in heaven,

And join your feasts and all your forest games
As far as maiden might. Farewell, good fellows!

[*Exeunt several foresters, the others withdraw to the back.*

ROBIN.

Sit here by me, where the most beaten track
Runs thro' the forest, hundreds of huge oaks,
Gnarl'd—older than the thrones of Europe—look,
What breadth, height, strength—torrents of eddying bark!
Some hollow-hearted from exceeding age—
That never be thy lot or mine!—and some
Pillaring a leaf-sky on their monstrous boles,
Sound at the core as we are. Fifty leagues
Of woodland hear and know my horn, that scares
The Baron at the torture of his churls,
The pillage of his vassals.
O maiden-wife,
The oppression of our people moves me so,
That when I think of it hotly, Love himself
Seems but a ghost, but when thou feel'st with me
The ghost returns to Marian, clothes itself
In maiden flesh and blood, and looks at once
Maid Marian, and that maiden freedom which
Would never brook the tyrant. Live thou maiden!
Thou art more my wife so feeling, than if my wife

And siding with these proud priests, and these Barons,
Devils, that make this blessed England hell.

MARIAN.

Earl——

ROBIN.

Nay, no Earl am I. I am English yeoman.

MARIAN.

Then *I* am yeo-woman. O the clumsy word!

ROBIN.

Take thou this light kiss for thy clumsy word.
Kiss me again.

MARIAN.

Robin, I will not kiss thee,
For that belongs to marriage; but I hold thee
The husband of my heart, the noblest light
That ever flash'd across my life, and I
Embrace thee with the kisses of the soul.

ROBIN.

I thank thee.

MARIAN.

Scarlet told me—is it true?—
That John last week return'd to Nottingham,
And all the foolish world is pressing thither.

ROBIN.

Sit here, my queen, and judge the world with me.
Doubtless, like judges of another bench,
However wise, we must at times have wrought
Some great injustice, yet, far as we knew,
We never robb'd one friend of the true King.
We robb'd the traitors that are leagued with John;
We robb'd the lawyer who went against the law;
We spared the craftsman, chapman, all that live
By their own hands, the labourer, the poor priest;
We spoil'd the prior, friar, abbot, monk,
For playing upside down with Holy Writ.
'Sell all thou hast and give it to the poor;'
Take all they have and give it to thyself!
Then after we have eased them of their coins
It is our forest custom they should revel
Along with Robin.

MARIAN.

And if a woman pass——

ROBIN.

Dear, in these days of Norman license, when
Our English maidens are their prey, if ever
A Norman damsel fell into our hands,
In this dark wood when all was in our power
We never wrong'd a woman.

MARIAN.

Noble Robin.

LITTLE JOHN (*coming forward*).

Here come three beggars.

Enter the three BEGGARS.

LITTLE JOHN.

Toll!

FIRST BEGGAR.

Eh! we be beggars, we come to ask o' you. We ha' nothing.

SECOND BEGGAR.

Rags, nothing but our rags.

THIRD BEGGAR.

I have but one penny in pouch, and so you would make it two I should be grateful.

MARIAN.

Beggars, you are sturdy rogues that should be set to work. You are those that tramp the country, filch the linen from the hawthorn, poison the house-dog,

and scare lonely maidens at the farmstead. Search them, Little John.

LITTLE JOHN.

These two have forty gold marks between them, Robin.

ROBIN.

Cast them into our treasury, the beggars' mites. Part shall go to the almshouses at Nottingham, part to the shrine of our Lady. Search this other.

LITTLE JOHN.

He hath, as he said, but one penny.

ROBIN.

Leave it with him and add a gold mark thereto. He hath spoken truth in a world of lies.

THIRD BEGGAR.

I thank you, my lord.

LITTLE JOHN.

A fine, a fine! he hath called plain Robin a lord. How much for a beggar?

ROBIN.

Take his penny and leave him his gold mark.

LITTLE JOHN.

Sit there, knaves, till the captain call for you.

[*They pass behind the trunk of an oak on the right.*

MARIAN.

Art thou not hard upon them, my good Robin?

ROBIN.

They might be harder upon thee, if met in a black lane at midnight: the throat might gape before the tongue could cry who?

LITTLE JOHN.

Here comes a citizen, and I think his wife.

Enter CITIZEN *and* WIFE.

CITIZEN.

That business which we have in Nottingham——

LITTLE JOHN.

Halt!

CITIZEN.

O dear wife, we have fallen into the hands
Of Robin Hood.

MARIAN.

And Robin Hood hath sworn—
Shame on thee, Little John, thou hast forgotten—
That by the blessed Mother no man, so
His own true wife came with him, should be stay'd
From passing onward. Fare you well, fair lady!

[*Bowing to her.*

ROBIN.

And may your business thrive in Nottingham!

CITIZEN.

I thank you, noble sir, the very blossom
Of bandits. Courtesy to him, wife, and thank him.

WIFE.

I thank you, noble sir, and will pray for you
That *you* may thrive, but in some kindlier trade.

CITIZEN.

Away, away, wife, wilt thou anger him?

[*Exeunt* CITIZEN *and his* WIFE.

LITTLE JOHN.

Here come three friars.

ROBIN.

Marian, thou and thy woman (*looking round*),
Why, where is Kate?

MARIAN (*calling*).

Kate!

KATE.

Here!

ROBIN.

Thou and thy woman are a match for three friars. Take thou my bow and arrow and compel them to pay toll.

MARIAN.

Toll!

Enter three FRIARS.

FIRST FRIAR (*advancing*).

Behold a pretty Dian of the wood,
Prettier than that same widow which you wot of.
Ha, brother. Toll, my dear? the toll of love.

MARIAN (*drawing bow*).

Back! how much money hast thou in thy purse?

FIRST FRIAR.

Thou art playing with us. How should poor friars have money?

MARIAN.

How much ? how much ? Speak, or the arrow flies.

FIRST FRIAR.

How much ? well, now I bethink me, I have one mark in gold which a pious son of the Church gave me this morning on my setting forth.

MARIAN (*bending bow at the second*).

And thou ?

SECOND FRIAR.

Well, as he said, one mark in gold.

MARIAN (*bending bow at the third*).

And thou ?

THIRD FRIAR.

One mark in gold.

MARIAN.

Search them, Kate, and see if they have spoken truth.

KATE.

They are all mark'd men. They have told but a tenth of the truth : they have each ten marks in gold.

MARIAN.

Leave them each what they say is theirs, and take the twenty-seven marks to the captain's treasury. Sit there till you be called for.

FIRST FRIAR.

We have fall'n into the hands of Robin Hood.

[MARIAN *and* KATE *return to* ROBIN.

[*The* FRIARS *pass behind an oak on the left.*

ROBIN.

Honour to thee, brave Marian, and thy Kate.
I know them arrant knaves in Nottingham.
One half of this shall go to those they have wrong'd,
One half shall pass into our treasury.
Where lies that cask of wine whereof we plunder'd
The Norman prelate ?

LITTLE JOHN.

In that oak, where twelve
Can stand upright, nor touch each other.

ROBIN.

Good !
Roll it in here. These friars, thieves, and liars,
Shall drink the health of our new woodland Queen.

And they shall pledge thee, Marian, loud enough
To fright the wild swan passing overhead,
The mouldwarp underfoot.

MARIAN.

They pledge me, Robin?
The silent blessing of one honest man
Is heard in heaven—the wassail yells of thief
And rogue and liar echo down in Hell,
And wake the Devil, and I may sicken by 'em.
Well, well, be it so, thou strongest thief of all,
For thou hast stolen my will, and made it thine.

FRIAR TUCK, LITTLE JOHN, MUCH,
and SCARLET *roll in cask.*

FRIAR TUCK.

I marvel is it sack or Malvoisie?

ROBIN.

Do me the service to tap it, and thou wilt know.

FRIAR TUCK.

I would tap myself in thy service, Robin.

ROBIN.

And thou wouldst run more wine than blood.

FRIAR TUCK.

And both at thy service, Robin.

ROBIN.

I believe thee, thou art a good fellow, though a friar. [*They pour the wine into cups.*

FRIAR TUCK.

Fill to the brim. Our Robin, King o' the woods,
Wherever the horn sound, and the buck bound,
Robin, the people's friend, the King o' the woods.
[*They drink.*

ROBIN.

To the brim and over till the green earth drink
Her health along with us in this rich draught,
And answer it in flowers. The Queen o' the woods,
Wherever the buck bound, and the horn sound,
Maid Marian, Queen o' the woods! [*They drink.*

Here, you three rogues,
[*To the* BEGGARS. *They come out.*
You caught a lonely woodman of our band,
And bruised him almost to the death, and took
His monies.

THIRD BEGGAR.

Captain, nay, it wasn't me.

ROBIN.

You ought to dangle up there among the crows.
Drink to the health of our new Queen o' the woods,
Or else be bound and beaten.

FIRST BEGGAR.

Sir, sir—well,
We drink the health of thy new Queen o' the woods.

ROBIN.

Louder! louder! Maid Marian, Queen o' the woods!

BEGGARS (*shouting*).

Maid Marian, Queen o' the woods: Queen o' the woods.

FIRST *and* SECOND BEGGARS (*aside*).

The black fiend grip her!

[*They drink.*

ROBIN (*to the* FRIARS).

And you three holy men,

[*They come out.*

You worshippers of the Virgin, one of you
Shamed a too trustful widow whom you heard
In her confession; and another—worse!—
An innocent maid. Drink to the Queen o' the woods,
Or else be bound and beaten.

FIRST FRIAR.

Robin Hood,
These be the lies the people tell of us,
Because we seek to curb their viciousness.
However—to this maid, this Queen o' the woods.

ROBIN.

Louder, louder, ye knaves. Maid Marian!
Queen o' the woods!

FRIARS (*shouting*).

Maid Marian, Queen o' the woods.

FIRST FRIAR (*aside*).

Maid?

SECOND FRIAR (*aside*).

Paramour!

THIRD FRIAR (*aside*).

Hell take her!

[*They drink.*

FRIAR TUCK.

Robin, will you not hear one of these beggars' catches? They can do it. I have heard 'em in the market at Mansfield.

LITTLE JOHN.

No, my lord, hear ours—Robin—I crave pardon, I always think of you as my lord, but I may still say my lady; and, my lady, Kate and I have fallen out again, and I pray you to come between us again, for, my lady, we have made a song in your honour, so your ladyship care to listen.

ROBIN.

Sing, and by St. Mary these beggars and these friars shall join you. Play the air, Little John.

LITTLE JOHN.

Air and word, my lady, are maid and man. Join them and they are a true marriage; and so, I pray you, my lady, come between me and my Kate and make us one again. Scarlet, begin.

[*Playing the air on his viol.*

SCARLET.

By all the deer that spring
Thro' wood and lawn and ling,
When all the leaves are green;
By arrow and gray goosewing,
When horn and echo ring,
We care so much for a King;
We care not much for a Queen—
For a Queen, for a Queen o' the woods.

MARIAN.

Do you call that in my honour?

SCARLET.

Bitters before dinner, my lady, to give you a relish. The first part—made before you came among us—they put it upon me because I have a bad wife. I love you all the same. Proceed. [*All the rest sing.*

By all the leaves of spring,
And all the birds that sing
When all the leaves are green;
By arrow and by bowstring,
We care so much for a King
That we would die for a Queen—
For a Queen, for a Queen o' the woods.

Enter FORESTER.

FORESTER.

Black news, black news from Nottingham! I grieve
I am the Raven who croaks it. My lord John,
In wrath because you drove him from the forest,
Is coming with a swarm of mercenaries
To break our band and scatter us to the winds.

MARIAN.

O Robin, Robin! See that men be set
Along the glades and passes of the wood

To warn us of his coming! then each man
That owns a wife or daughter, let him bury her
Even in the bowels of the earth to scape
The glance of John——

ROBIN.

You hear your Queen, obey!

END OF ACT III

ACT IV

THE CONCLUSION

ACT IV

SCENE.—*A forest bower, cavern in background. Sunrise.*

MARIAN (*rising to meet Robin*).

Robin, the sweet light of a mother's eye,
That beam of dawn upon the opening flower,
Has never glanced upon me when a child.
He was my father, mother, both in one.
The love that children owe to both I give
To him alone.

(ROBIN *offers to caress* ***her.***)

MARIAN.

Quiet, good Robin, quiet!
You lovers are such clumsy summer-flies
For ever buzzing at your lady's face.

ROBIN.

Bees rather, flying to the flower for honey.

MARIAN (*sings*).

The bee buzz'd up in the heat.
'I am faint for your honey, my sweet.'
The flower said 'Take it, my dear,
For now is the spring of the year.
So come, come!'
'Hum!'
And the bee buzz'd down from the heat.

And the bee buzz'd up in the cold
When the flower was wither'd and old.
'Have you still any honey, my dear?'
She said 'It's the fall of the year,
But come, come!'
'Hum!'
And the bee buzz'd off in the cold.

ROBIN.

Out on thy song!

MARIAN.

Did I not sing it in tune?

ROBIN.

No, sweetheart! out of tune with Love and me.

MARIAN.

And yet in tune with Nature and the bees.

ROBIN.

Out on it, I say, as out of tune and time!

MARIAN.

Till thou thyself shalt come to sing it—in time.

ROBIN (*taking a tress of her hair in his hand*).

Time! if his backward-working alchemy
Should change this gold to silver, why, the silver
Were dear as gold, the wrinkle as the dimple.
Thy bee should buzz about the Court of John.
No ribald John is Love, no wanton Prince,
The ruler of an hour, but lawful King,
Whose writ will run thro' all the range of life.
Out upon all hard-hearted maidenhood!

MARIAN.

And out upon all simple batchelors!
Ah, well! thou seest the land has come between us,
And my sick father here has come between us,
And this rich Sheriff too has come between us;
So, is it not all over now between us?
Gone, like a deer that hath escaped thine arrow!

ROBIN.

What deer when I have mark'd him ever yet
Escaped mine arrow? over is it? wilt thou
Give me thy hand on that?

MARIAN.

Take it.

ROBIN (*kisses her hand*).

The Sheriff!

This ring cries out against thee. Say it again,
And by this ring the lips that never breathed
Love's falsehood to true maid will seal Love's truth
On those sweet lips that dare to dally with it.

MARIAN.

Quiet, quiet! or I will to my father.

ROBIN.

So, then, thy father will not grace our feast
With his white beard to-day.

MARIAN.

Being so sick
How should he, Robin?

ROBIN.

Then that bond he hath
Of the Abbot—wilt thou ask him for it?

MARIAN.

Why?

ROBIN.

I have sent to the Abbot and justiciary
To bring their counter-bond into the forest.

MARIAN.

But will they come?

ROBIN.

If not I have let them know
Their lives unsafe in any of these our woods,
And in the winter I will fire their farms.
But I have sworn by our Lady if they come
I will not tear the bond, but see fair play
Betwixt them and Sir Richard—promised too,
So that they deal with us like honest men,
They shall be handled with all courteousness.

MARIAN.

What wilt thou do with the bond then?

ROBIN.

Wait and see.
What wilt thou do with the Sheriff?

MARIAN.

Wait and see.
I bring the bond. [*Exit* MARIAN.

Enter LITTLE JOHN, FRIAR TUCK, *and* MUCH, *and* FORESTERS *and* PEASANTS *laughing and talking.*

ROBIN.

Have you glanced down thro' all the forest ways
And mark'd if those two knaves from York be coming?

LITTLE JOHN.

Not yet, but here comes one of bigger mould.

Enter KING RICHARD.

Art thou a knight?

KING RICHARD.

I am.

ROBIN.

And walkest here
Unarmour'd? all these walks are Robin Hood's
And sometimes perilous.

KING RICHARD.

Good! but having lived
For twenty days and nights in mail, at last
I crawl'd like a sick crab from my old shell,
That I might breathe for a moment free of shield
And cuirass in this forest where I dream'd

That all was peace—not even a Robin Hood—
(*Aside*) What if these knaves should know me for their King?

ROBIN.

Art thou for Richard, or allied to John?

KING RICHARD.

I *am* allied to John.

ROBIN.

The worse for thee.

KING RICHARD.

Art thou that banish'd lord of Huntingdon,
The chief of these outlaws who break the law?

ROBIN.

I am the yeoman, plain Robin Hood, and being out of the law how should we break the law? if we broke into it again we should break the law, and then we were no longer outlaws.

KING RICHARD.

But, Earl, if thou be he——

FRIAR TUCK.

Fine him! fine him! he hath called plain Robin an earl. How much is it, Robin, for a knight?

ROBIN.

A mark.

KING RICHARD (*gives it*).

There.

ROBIN.

Thou payest easily, like a good fellow,
But being o' John's side we must have thy gold.

KING RICHARD.

But I am more for Richard than for John.

ROBIN.

What, what, a truckler! a word-eating coward!
Nay, search him then. How much hast thou about thee?

KING RICHARD.

I had one mark.

ROBIN.

What more?

KING RICHARD.

No more, I think.
But how then if I will not bide to be search'd?

ROBIN.

We are four to one.

KING RICHARD.

And I might deal with four.

ROBIN.

Good, good, I love thee for that! but if I wind
This forest-horn of mine I can bring down
Fourscore tall fellows on thee.

KING RICHARD.

Search me then.
I should be hard beset with thy fourscore.

LITTLE JOHN (*searching* KING RICHARD).

Robin, he hath no more. He hath spoken truth.

ROBIN.

I am glad of it. Give him back his gold again.

KING RICHARD.

But I had liefer than this gold again—
Not having broken fast the livelong day—
Something to eat.

ROBIN.

And thou shalt have it, man.
Our feast is yonder, spread beneath an oak,

Venison, and wild boar, wild goose, besides
Hedge-pigs, a savoury viand, so thou be
Squeamish at eating the King's venison.

KING RICHARD.

Nay, Robin, I am like thyself in that
I look on the King's venison as my own.

FRIAR TUCK.

Ay, ay, Robin, but let him know our forest laws: he that pays not for his dinner must fight for it. In the sweat of thy brow, says Holy Writ, shalt thou eat bread, but in the sweat of thy brow and thy breast, and thine arms, and thy legs, and thy heart, and thy liver, and in the fear of thy life shalt thou eat the King's venison—ay, and so thou fight at quarterstaff for thy dinner with our Robin, that will give thee a new zest for it, though thou wert like a bottle full up to the cork, or as hollow as a kex, or the shambles-oak, or a weasel-sucked egg, or the head of a fool, or the heart of Prince John, or any other symbol of vacuity.

[*They bring out the quarterstaffs, and the foresters and peasants crowd round to see the games, and applaud at intervals.*

KING RICHARD.

Great woodland king, I know not quarterstaff.

LITTLE JOHN.

A fine! a fine! He hath called plain Robin a king.

ROBIN.

A shadow, a poetical fiction—did ye not call me king in your song?—a mere figure. Let it go by.

FRIAR TUCK.

No figure, no fiction, Robin. What, is not man a hunting animal? And look you now, if we kill a stag, our dogs have their paws cut off, and the hunters, if caught, are blinded, or worse than blinded. Is that to be a king? If the king and the law work injustice, is not he that goes against the king and the law the true king in the sight of the King of kings? Thou art the king of the forest, and I would thou wert the king of the land.

KING RICHARD.

This friar is of much boldness, noble captain.

ROBIN.

He hath got it from the bottle, noble knight.

FRIAR TUCK.

Boldness out of the bottle! I defy thee.
Boldness is in the blood, Truth in the bottle.

She lay so long at the bottom of her well
In the cold water that she lost her voice,
And so she glided up into the heart
O' the bottle, the warm wine, and found it again.
In vino veritas. Shall I undertake
The knight at quarterstaff, or thou?

ROBIN.

Peace, magpie!
Give him the quarterstaff. Nay, but thyself
Shalt play a bout with me, that he may see
The fashion of it.

[*Plays with* LITTLE JOHN *at quarterstaff.*

KING RICHARD.

Well, then, let me try. [*They play.*
I yield, I yield. I know no quarterstaff.

ROBIN.

Then thou shalt play the game of buffets with us.

KING RICHARD.

What's that?

ROBIN.

I stand up here, thou there. I give thee
A buffet, and thou me. The Holy Virgin

Stand by the strongest. I am overbreathed,
Friar, by my two bouts at quarterstaff.
Take him and try him, friar.

FRIAR TUCK.

There! [*Strikes.*

KING RICHARD (*strikes*).

There! [FRIAR *falls.*

FRIAR TUCK.

There!
Thou hast roll'd over the Church militant
Like a tod of wool from wagon into warehouse.
Nay, I defy thee still. Try me an hour hence.
I am misty with my thimbleful of ale.

ROBIN.

Thou seest, Sir Knight, our friar is so holy
That he's a miracle-monger, and can make
Five quarts pass into a thimble. Up, good Much.

FRIAR TUCK.

And show thyself more of a man than me.

MUCH.

Well, no man yet has ever bowl'd me down.

SCARLET.

Ay, for old Much is every inch a man.

ROBIN.

We should be all the more beholden to him.

MUCH.

Much and more! much and more! I am the oldest of thy men, and thou and thy youngsters are always muching and moreing me.

ROBIN.

Because thou art always so much more of a man than my youngsters, old Much.

MUCH.

Well, we Muches be old.

ROBIN.

Old as the hills.

MUCH.

Old as the mill. We had it i' the Red King's time, and so I *may* be more of a man than to be bowled over like a ninepin. There! [*Strikes.*

KING RICHARD.

There! [MUCH *falls.*

ROBIN.

'Much would have more,' says the proverb: but Much hath had more than enough. Give me thy hand, Much; I love thee (*lifts him up*). At him, Scarlet!

SCARLET.

I cannot cope with him: my wrist is strain'd.

KING RICHARD.

Try, thyself, valorous Robin!

ROBIN.

I am mortally afear'd o' thee, thou big man,
But seeing valour is one against all odds,
There!

KING RICHARD.

There! [ROBIN *falls back, and is caught in the arms of* LITTLE JOHN.

ROBIN.

Good, now I love thee mightily, thou tall fellow.
Break thine alliance with this faithless John,
And live with us and the birds in the green wood.

KING RICHARD.

I cannot break it, Robin, if I wish'd.
Still I am more for Richard than for John.

LITTLE JOHN.

Look, Robin, at the far end of the glade
I see two figures crawling up the hill.

[*Distant sound of trumpets.*

ROBIN.

The Abbot of York and his justiciary.

KING RICHARD (*aside*).

They know me. I must not as yet be known.
Friends, your free sports have swallow'd my free hour.
Farewell at once, for I must hence upon
The King's affair.

ROBIN.

Not taste his venison first?

FRIAR TUCK.

Hast thou not fought for it, and earn'd it? Stay,
Dine with my brethren here, and on thine own.

KING RICHARD.

And which be they?

FRIAR TUCK.

Wild geese, for how canst thou be thus allied
With John, and serve King Richard save thou be

A traitor or a goose? but stay with Robin;
For Robin is no scatterbrains like Richard,
Robin's a wise man, Richard a wiseacre,
Robin's an outlaw, but he helps the poor.
While Richard hath outlaw'd himself, and helps
Nor rich, nor poor. Richard's the king of courtesy,
For if he did me the good grace to kick me
I could but sneak and smile and call it courtesy,
For he's a king.
And that is only courtesy *by* courtesy—
But Robin is a thief of courtesy
Whom they that suffer by him call the blossom
Of bandits. There—to be a thief of courtesy—
There is a trade of genius, there's glory!
Again, this Richard sacks and wastes a town
With random pillage, but our Robin takes
From whom he knows are hypocrites and liars.
Again this Richard risks his life for a straw,
So lies in prison—while our Robin's life
Hangs by a thread, but he is a free man.
Richard, again, is king over a realm
He hardly knows, and Robin king of Sherwood,
And loves and doats on every dingle of it.
Again this Richard is the lion of Cyprus,
Robin, the lion of Sherwood—may this mouth
Never suck grape again, if our true Robin
Be not the nobler lion of the twain.

KING RICHARD.

Gramercy for thy preachment! if the land
Were ruleable by tongue, thou shouldst be king.
And yet thou know'st how little of thy king!
What was this realm of England, all the crowns
Of all this world, to Richard when he flung
His life, heart, soul into those holy wars
That sought to free the tomb-place of the King
Of all the world? thou, that art churchman too
In a fashion, and shouldst feel with him. Farewell!
I left mine horse and armour with a Squire,
And I must see to 'em.

ROBIN.

When wilt thou return?

KING RICHARD.

Return, I? when? when Richard will return.

ROBIN.

No sooner? when will that be? canst thou tell?
But I have ta'en a sudden fancy to thee.
Accept this horn! if e'er thou be assail'd
In any of our forests, blow upon it
Three mots, this fashion—listen! (*blows*) Canst thou
do it? [KING RICHARD *blows.*
Blown like a true son of the woods. Farewell!

[*Exit* KING RICHARD.

Enter ABBOT *and* JUSTICIARY.

FRIAR TUCK.

Church and Law, halt and pay toll!

JUSTICIARY.

Rogue, we have thy captain's safe-conduct; though he be the chief of rogues, he hath never broken his word.

ABBOT.

There is our bond.

[*Gives it to* ROBIN.

ROBIN.

I thank thee.

JUSTICIARY.

Ay, but where,
Where is this old Sir Richard of the Lea?
Thou told'st us we should meet him in the forest,
Where he would pay us down his thousand marks.

ROBIN.

Give him another month, and he will pay it.

JUSTICIARY.

We cannot give a month.

ROBIN.

Why then a week.

JUSTICIARY.

No, not an hour: the debt is due to-day.

ABBOT.

Where is this laggard Richard of the Lea?

ROBIN.

He hath been hurt, was growing whole again,
Only this morning in his agony
Lest he should fail to pay these thousand marks
He is stricken with a slight paralysis.
Have you no pity? must you see the man?

JUSTICIARY.

Ay, ay, what else? how else can this be settled?

ROBIN.

Go men, and fetch him hither on the litter.

[SIR RICHARD LEA *is brought in.*
MARIAN *comes with him.*

MARIAN.

Here is my father's bond. [*Gives it to* ROBIN HOOD.

ROBIN.

I thank thee, dear.

JUSTICIARY.

Sir Richard, it was agreed when you borrowed these monies from the Abbot that if they were not repaid within a limited time your land should be forfeit.

SIR RICHARD.

The land! the land.

MARIAN.

You see he is past himself.
What would you more?

ABBOT.

What more? one thousand marks,
Or else the land.
You hide this damsel in your forest here,
[*Pointing to* MARIAN.
You hope to hold and keep her for yourself,
You heed not how you soil her maiden fame,
You scheme against her father's weal and hers,
For so this maid would wed our brother, he
Would pay us all the debt at once, and thus
This old Sir Richard might redeem his land.
He is all for love, he cares not for the land.

SIR RICHARD.

The land, the land!

ROBIN (*giving two bags to the* ABBOT).

Here be one thousand marks
Out of our treasury to redeem the land.
[*Pointing to each of the bags.*
Half here, half there. [*Plaudits from his band.*

JUSTICIARY.

Ay, ay, but there is use, four hundred marks.

ROBIN (*giving a bag to* JUSTICIARY).

There then, four hundred marks. [*Plaudits.*

JUSTICIARY.

What did I say?
Nay, my tongue tript—five hundred marks for use.

ROBIN (*giving another bag to him*).

A hundred more? There then, a hundred more.
[*Plaudits.*

JUSTICIARY.

Ay, ay, but you see the bond and the letter of the law. It is stated there that these monies should be paid in to the Abbot at York, at the end of the month at noon, and they are delivered here in the wild wood an hour after noon.

MARIAN.

The letter—O how often justice drowns
Between the law and letter of the law!
O God, I would the letter of the law
Were some strong fellow here in the wild wood,
That thou might'st beat him down at quarterstaff!
Have you no pity?

JUSTICIARY.

You run down your game,
We ours. What pity have you for your game?

ROBIN.

We needs must live. Our bowmen are so true
They strike the deer at once to death—he falls
And knows no more.

MARIAN.

Pity, pity!—There was a man of ours
Up in the north, a goodly fellow too,
He met a stag there on so narrow a ledge—
A precipice above, and one below—
There was no room to advance or to retire.
The man lay down—the delicate-footed creature
Came stepping o'er him, so as not to harm him—
The hunter's passion flash'd into the man,
He drove his knife into the heart of the deer,
The deer fell dead to the bottom, and the man

Fell with him, and was crippled ever after.
I fear I had small pity for that man.—
You have the monies and the use of them.
What would you more?

JUSTICIARY.

What? must we dance attendance all the day?

ROBIN.

Dance! ay, by all the saints and all the devils ye shall dance. When the Church and the law have forgotten God's music, they shall dance to the music of the wild wood. Let the birds sing, and do you dance to their song. What, you will not? Strike up our music, Little John. (*He plays.*) They will not! Prick 'em in the calves with the arrow-points—prick 'em in the calves.

ABBOT.

Rogue, I am full of gout. I cannot dance.

ROBIN.

And Sir Richard cannot redeem his land. Sweat out your gout, friend, for by my life, you shall dance till he can. Prick him in the calves!

JUSTICIARY.

Rogue, I have a swollen vein in my right leg, and if thou prick me there I shall die.

ROBIN.

Prick him where thou wilt, so that he dance.

ABBOT.

Rogue, we come not alone.

JUSTICIARY.

Not the right.

ABBOT.

We told the Prince and the Sheriff of our coming.

JUSTICIARY.

Take the left leg for the love of God.

ABBOT.

They follow us.

JUSTICIARY.

You will all of you hang.

ROBIN.

Let us hang, so thou dance meanwhile ; or by that same love of God we will hang *thee*, prince or no prince, sheriff or no sheriff.

JUSTICIARY.

Take care, take care! I dance—I will dance—I dance. [ABBOT *and* JUSTICIARY *dance to music, each holding a bag in each hand.*

Enter SCARLET.

SCARLET.

The Sheriff! the Sheriff, follow'd by Prince John
And all his mercenaries! We sighted 'em
Only this moment. By St. Nicholas
They must have sprung like Ghosts from underground,
Or, like the Devils they are, straight up from Hell.

ROBIN.

Crouch all into the bush!

[*The foresters and peasants hide behind the bushes.*

MARIAN.

Take up the litter!

SIR RICHARD.

Move me no more! I am sick and faint with pain!

MARIAN.

But, Sir, the Sheriff——

SIR RICHARD.

Let me be, I say!
The Sheriff will be welcome! let me be!

MARIAN.

Give me my bow and arrows. I remain
Beside my Father's litter.

ROBIN.

And fear not thou!
Each of us has an arrow on the cord;
We all keep watch.

Enter SHERIFF OF NOTTINGHAM.

SHERIFF.

Marian!

MARIAN.

Speak not. I wait upon a dying father.

SHERIFF.

The debt hath not been paid. She will be mine.
What are you capering for? By old St. Vitus
Have you gone mad? Has it been paid?

ABBOT (*dancing*).

O yes.

SHERIFF.

Have I lost her then?

JUSTICIARY (*dancing*).

Lost her? O no, we took
Advantage of the letter—O Lord, the vein!
Not paid at York—the wood—prick me no more!

SHERIFF.

What pricks thee save it be thy conscience, man?

JUSTICIARY.

By my halidome I felt him at my leg still. Where be they gone to?

SHERIFF.

Thou art alone in the silence of the forest
Save for this maiden and thy brother Abbot,
And this old crazeling in the litter there.

Enter on one side FRIAR TUCK *from the bush, and on the other* PRINCE JOHN *and his* SPEARMEN, *with banners and trumpets, etc.*

JUSTICIARY (*examining his leg*).

They have missed the vein.

ABBOT.

And we shall keep the land.

SHERIFF.

Sweet Marian, by the letter of the law
It seems thy father's land is forfeited.

SIR RICHARD.

No! let me out of the litter. He shall wed thee:
The land shall still be mine. Child, thou shalt wed
him,
Or thine old father will go mad—he will,
He will—he feels it in his head.

MARIAN.

O peace!
Father, I cannot marry till Richard comes.

SIR RICHARD.

And then the Sheriff!

MARIAN.

Ay, the Sheriff, father,
Would buy me for a thousand marks in gold—
Sell me again perchance for twice as much.
A woman's heart is but a little thing,
Much lighter than a thousand marks in gold;

But pity for a father, it may be,
Is weightier than a thousand marks in gold.
I cannot love the Sheriff.

SIR RICHARD.

But thou wilt wed him?

MARIAN.

Ay, save King Richard, when he comes, forbid me.
Sweet heavens, I could wish that all the land
Were plunged beneath the waters of the sea,
Tho' all the world should go about in boats.

FRIAR TUCK.

Why, so should all the love-sick be sea-sick.

MARIAN.

Better than heart-sick, friar.

PRINCE JOHN (*to* SHERIFF).

See you not
They are jesting at us yonder, mocking us?
Carry her off, and let the old man die.

[*Advancing to* MARIAN.

Come, girl, thou shalt along with us on the instant.

FRIAR TUCK (*brandishing his staff*).

Then on the instant I will break thy head.

SHERIFF.

Back, thou fool-friar! Knowest thou not the Prince?

FRIAR TUCK (*muttering*).

He may be prince; he is not gentleman.

PRINCE JOHN.

Look! I will take the rope from off thy waist
And twist it round thy neck and hang thee by it.
Seize him and truss him up, and carry her off.

[FRIAR TUCK *slips into the bush.*

MARIAN (*drawing the bow*).

No nearer to me! back! My hand is firm,
Mine eye most true to one hair's-breadth of aim.
You, Prince, our king to come—you that dishonour
The daughters and the wives of your own faction—
Who hunger for the body, not the soul—
This gallant Prince would have me of his—what?
Household? or shall I call it by that new term
Brought from the sacred East, his harem? Never,
Tho' you should queen me over all the realms
Held by King Richard, could I stoop so low
As mate with one that holds no love is pure,
No friendship sacred, values neither man
Nor woman save as tools—God help the mark—
To his own unprincely ends. And you, you, Sheriff,

[*Turning to the* SHERIFF.

Who thought to buy your marrying me with gold,
Marriage is of the soul, not of the body.
Win me you cannot, murder me you may,
And all I love, Robin, and all his men,
For I am one with him and his; but while
I breathe Heaven's air, and Heaven looks down on me,
And smiles at my best meanings, I remain
Mistress of mine own self and mine own soul.
[*Retreating, with bow drawn, to the bush.*
Robin!

ROBIN.

I am here, my arrow on the cord.
He dies who dares to touch thee.

PRINCE JOHN.

Advance, advance!
What, daunted by a garrulous, arrogant girl!
Seize her and carry her off into my castle.

SHERIFF.

Thy castle!

PRINCE JOHN.

Said I not, I loved thee, man?
Risk not the love I bear thee for a girl.

SHERIFF.

Thy castle!

PRINCE JOHN.

See thou thwart me not, thou fool!
When Richard comes he is soft enough to pardon
His brother; but all those that held with him,
Except I plead for them, will hang as high
As Haman.

SHERIFF.

She is mine. I have thy promise.

PRINCE JOHN.

O ay, she shall be thine—first mine, then thine,
For she shall spend her honeymoon with me.

SHERIFF.

Woe to that land shall own thee for her king!

PRINCE JOHN.

Advance, advance!

[*They advance shouting. The* KING *in armour reappears from the wood.*

KING RICHARD.

What shouts are these that ring along the wood?

FRIAR TUCK (*coming forward*).

Hail, knight, and help us. Here is one would clutch
Our pretty Marian for his paramour,
This other, willy-nilly, for his bride.

KING RICHARD.

Damsel, is this the truth?

MARIAN.

Ay, noble knight.

FRIAR TUCK.

Ay, and she will not marry till Richard come.

KING RICHARD (*raising his vizor*).

I am here, and I am he.

PRINCE JOHN (*lowering his, and whispering to his men*).

It is not he—his face—tho' very like—
No, no! we have certain news he died in prison.
Make at him, all of you, a traitor coming
In Richard's name—it is not he—not he.

[*The men stand amazed.*

FRIAR TUCK (*going back to the bush*).

Robin, shall we not move?

ROBIN.

It is the King
Who bears all down. Let him alone awhile.
He loves the chivalry of his single arm.
Wait till he blow the horn.

FRIAR TUCK (*coming back*).

If thou be king,
Be not a fool! Why blowest thou not the horn?

KING RICHARD.

I that have turn'd their Moslem crescent pale—
I blow the horn against this rascal rout!

[FRIAR TUCK *plucks the horn from him and blows.* RICHARD *dashes alone against the* SHERIFF *and* JOHN'S *men, and is almost borne down, when* ROBIN *and his men rush in and rescue him.*

KING RICHARD (*to* ROBIN HOOD).

Thou hast saved my head at the peril of thine own.

PRINCE JOHN.

A horse! a horse! I must away at once;
I cannot meet his eyes. I go to Nottingham.
Sheriff, thou wilt find me at Nottingham. [*Exit.*

SHERIFF.

If anywhere, I shall find thee in hell.
What! go to slay his brother, and make *me*
The monkey that should roast his chestnuts for him!

KING RICHARD.

I fear to ask who left us even now.

ROBIN.

I grieve to say it was thy father's son.
Shall I not after him and bring him back?

KING RICHARD.

No, let him be. Sheriff of Nottingham,

[SHERIFF *kneels*

I have been away from England all these years,
Heading the holy war against the Moslem,
While thou and others in our kingless realms
Were fighting underhand unholy wars
Against your lawful king.

SHERIFF.

My liege, Prince John—

KING RICHARD.

Say thou no word against my brother John.

SHERIFF.

Why then, my liege, I have no word to say.

KING RICHARD (*to* ROBIN).

My good friend Robin, Earl of Huntingdon,
For Earl thou art again, hast thou no fetters
For those of thine own band who would betray thee?

ROBIN.

I have; but these were never worn as yet.
I never found one traitor in my band.

KING RICHARD.

Thou art happier than thy king. Put him in chains.
[*They fetter the* SHERIFF.

ROBIN.

Look o'er these bonds, my liege.
[*Shows the* KING *the bonds. They talk together.*

KING RICHARD.

You, my lord Abbot, you Justiciary,
[*The* ABBOT *and* JUSTICIARY *kneel.*
I made you Abbot, you Justiciary:
You both are utter traitors to your king.

JUSTICIARY.

O my good liege, we did believe you dead.

ROBIN.

Was justice dead because the King was dead?
Sir Richard paid his monies to the Abbot.
You crost him with a quibble of your law.

KING RICHARD.

But on the faith and honour of a king
The land is his again.

SIR RICHARD.

The land! the land!
I am crazed no longer, so I have the land.
[*Comes out of the litter and kneels.*
God save the King!

KING RICHARD (*raising* SIR RICHARD).

I thank thee, good Sir Richard.
Maid Marian.

MARIAN.

Yes, King Richard.

KING RICHARD.

Thou wouldst marry
This Sheriff when King Richard came again
Except—

MARIAN.

The King forbad it. True, my liege

KING RICHARD.

How if the King command it?

MARIAN.

Then, my liege,
If you would marry me with a traitor sheriff,
I fear I might prove traitor with the sheriff.

KING RICHARD.

But if the King forbid thy marrying
With Robin, our good Earl of Huntingdon.

MARIAN.

Then will I live for ever in the wild wood.

ROBIN (*coming forward*).

And I with thee.

KING RICHARD.

On nuts and acorns, ha!
Or the King's deer? Earl, thou when we were hence
Hast broken all our Norman forest-laws,
And scruplest not to flaunt it to our face
That thou wilt break our forest laws again
When we are here. Thou art overbold.

ROBIN.

My king,
I am but the echo of the lips of love.

KING RICHARD.

Thou hast risk'd thy life for mine: bind these two men.

[*They take the bags from the* ABBOT *and* JUSTICIARY, *and proceed to fetter them.*

JUSTICIARY.

But will the King, then, judge us all unheard?
I can defend my cause against the traitors
Who fain would make me traitor. If the King
Condemn us without trial, men will call him
An Eastern tyrant, not an English king.

ABBOT.

Besides, my liege, these men are outlaws, thieves,
They break thy forest laws—nay, by the rood
They have done far worse—they plunder—yea, ev'n bishops,
Yea, ev'n archbishops—if thou side with these,
Beware, O King, the vengeance of the Church.

FRIAR TUCK (*brandishing his staff*).

I pray you, my liege, let me execute the vengeance of the Church upon them. I have a stout crabstick here, which longs to break itself across their backs.

ROBIN.

Keep silence, bully friar, before the King.

FRIAR TUCK.

If a cat may look at a king, may not a friar speak to one?

KING RICHARD.

I have had a year of prison-silence, Robin,
And heed him not—the vengeance of the Church!
Thou shalt pronounce the blessing of the Church
On those two here, Robin and Marian.

MARIAN.

He is but hedge-priest, Sir King.

KING RICHARD.

And thou their Queen.
Our rebel Abbot then shall join your hands,
Or lose all hope of pardon from us—yet
Not now, not now—with after-dinner grace.
Nay, by the dragon of St. George, we shall
Do some injustice, if you hold us here
Longer from our own venison. Where is it?
I scent it in the green leaves of the wood.

MARIAN.

First, king, a boon!

KING RICHARD.

Why surely ye are pardon'd,
Even this brawler of harsh truths—I trust

Half truths, good friar: ye shall with us to court.
Then, if ye cannot breathe but woodland air,
Thou Robin shalt be ranger of this forest,
And have thy fees, and break the law no more.

MARIAN.

It is not that, my lord.

KING RICHARD.

Then what, my lady?

ROBIN.

This is the gala-day of thy return.
I pray thee for the moment, strike the bonds
From these three men, and let them dine with us,
And lie with us among the flowers, and drink—
Ay, whether it be gall or honey to 'em—
The king's good health in ale and Malvoisie.

KING RICHARD.

By Mahound I could strive with Beelzebub!
So now which way to the dinner?

MARIAN.

Past the bank
Of foxglove, then to left by that one yew.
You see the darkness thro' the lighter leaf.
But look! who comes?

Enter SAILOR.

SAILOR.

We heard Sir Richard Lea was here with Robin.
O good Sir Richard, I am like the man
In Holy Writ, who brought his talent back;
For tho' we touch'd at many pirate ports,
We ever fail'd to light upon thy son.
Here is thy gold again. I am sorry for it.

SIR RICHARD.

The gold—my son—my gold, my son, the land—
Here Abbot, Sheriff—no—no, Robin Hood.

ROBIN.

Sir Richard, let that wait till we have dined.
Are all our guests here?

KING RICHARD.

No—there's yet one other:
I will not dine without him. Come from out

Enter WALTER LEA.

That oak-tree! This young warrior broke his prison
And join'd my banner in the Holy Land,
And cleft the Moslem turban at my side.
My masters, welcome gallant Walter Lea.
Kiss him, Sir Richard—kiss him, my sweet Marian.

MARIAN.

O Walter, Walter, is it thou indeed
Whose ransom was our ruin, whose return
Builds up our house again? I fear I dream.
Here—give me one sharp pinch upon the cheek
That I may feel thou art no phantom—yet
Thou art tann'd almost beyond my knowing, brother.

[*They embrace.*

WALTER LEA.

But thou art fair as ever, my sweet sister.

SIR RICHARD.

Art thou my son?

WALTER LEA.

I am, good father, I am.

SIR RICHARD.

I had despair'd of thee—that sent me crazed.
Thou art worth thy weight in all those marks of gold,
Yea, and the weight of the very land itself,
Down to the inmost centre.

ROBIN.

Walter Lea,

Give me that hand which fought for Richard there.
Embrace me, Marian, and thou, good Kate,
[*To* KATE *entering.*
Kiss and congratulate me, my good Kate.
[*She kisses him.*

LITTLE JOHN.

Lo now! lo now!
I have seen thee clasp and kiss a man indeed,
For our brave Robin is a man indeed.
Then by thine own account thou shouldst be mine.

KATE.

Well then, who kisses first?

LITTLE JOHN.

Kiss both together.
[*They kiss each other.*

ROBIN.

Then all is well. In this full tide of love,
Wave heralds wave: thy match shall follow mine (*to* LITTLE JOHN).
Would there were more—a hundred lovers more
To celebrate this advent of our King!
Our forest games are ended, our free life,
And we must hence to the King's court. I trust

We shall return to the wood. Meanwhile, farewell
Old friends, old patriarch oaks. A thousand winters
Will strip you bare as death, a thousand summers
Robe you life-green again. *You* seem, as it were,
Immortal, and we mortal. How few Junes
Will heat our pulses quicker! How few frosts
Will chill the hearts that beat for Robin Hood!

MARIAN.

And yet I think these oaks at dawn and even,
Or in the balmy breathings of the night,
Will whisper evermore of Robin Hood.
We leave but happy memories to the forest.
We dealt in the wild justice of the woods.
All those poor serfs whom we have served will bless
us,
All those pale mouths which we have fed will praise
us—
All widows we have holpen pray for us,
Our Lady's blessed shrines throughout the land
Be all the richer for us. You, good friar,
You Much, you Scarlet, you dear Little John,
Your names will cling like ivy to the wood.
And here perhaps a hundred years away
Some hunter in day-dreams or half asleep
Will hear our arrows whizzing overhead,
And catch the winding of a phantom horn.

ROBIN.

And surely these old oaks will murmur thee
Marian along with Robin. I am most happy—
Art thou not mine?—and happy that our King
Is here again, never I trust to roam
So far again, but dwell among his own.
Strike up a stave, my masters, all is well.

SONG WHILE THEY DANCE A COUNTRY DANCE.

Now the king is home again, and nevermore to roam again,
Now the king is home again, the king will have his own again,
Home again, home again, and each will have his own again,
All the birds in merry Sherwood sing and sing him home again.

APPENDIX AND NOTES

TO THE

POETICAL WORKS

OF

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

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APPENDIX.

UNPUBLISHED SONNET.

(*Written originally as a Preface to "Becket."*)

Old ghosts whose day was done ere mine began,
If earth be seen from your conjectured heaven,
Ye know that History is half-dream — ay even
The man's life in the letters of the man.
There lies the letter, but it is not he
As he retires into himself and is:
Sender and sent-to go to make up this,
Their offspring of this union. And on me
Frown not, old ghosts, if I be one of those
Who make you utter things you did not say,
And mould you all awry and mar your worth;
For whatsoever knows us truly, knows
That none can truly write his single day,
And none can write it for him upon earth.

NOTES.

NOTES ON BECKET.

By the Editor.

[In 1879 my father printed the first proofs of his tragedy of *Becket*, which he had begun in December 1876. But he considered that the time was not ripe for its publication; and this therefore was deferred until December 1884. We had visited Canterbury in August 1877, and gone over each separate scene of Becket's martyrdom. "Admirers of Becket," my father notes, "will find that Becket's letters, and the writings of Herbert of Bosham, Fitzstephen, and John of Salisbury throw great light on those days. Bishop Lightfoot found out about Rosamund for me."

The play is so accurate a representation of the personages and of the time, that J. R. Green said that all his researches into the annals of the twelfth century had not given him "so vivid a conception of the character of Henry II. and his court as was embodied in Tennyson's *Becket*."

To my father it was interesting to learn the impression made upon Roman Catholics by this work. He first asked the opinion of his neighbour at Freshwater, W. G. Ward. He could not have asked a more candid,

truth-speaking critic than this "most generous of all Ultramontanes," who was deeply versed not only in the spirit and doctrine of his own Church, but also in the modern French and English drama. My father once said of Ward when speaking to a friend of Roman Catholic casuistry: "Well, one of the most truthful men I ever met was a strict Ultramontane: he was grotesquely truthful." They thoroughly understood each other, for Ward was "full of fun and faith." So it came to pass that my father often discussed religion and Roman Catholicism with him in their walks together. He once said to Ward, "You know you would try to get me put in prison if the Pope bid you." Ward replied, "The Pope would never tell me to do anything so foolish."

It may be imagined that we looked forward with some anxiety to the evening when Ward had promised to be at Farringford to hear *Becket*. He came, as it afterwards appeared, to listen patiently, though convinced "that the whole play would be out of his line." At the end of the play he broke out into enthusiastic praise. "Dear me! I did not expect to enjoy it at all. It is splendid! How wonderfully you have brought out the phases of his character as Chancellor and Archbishop! Where did you get it all?"

Struggle for power under one guise or another has doubtless been among the most fruitful sources of theme for tragedy. During many centuries, as we know, "spiritual power," clothed in earthly panoply, seemed to most men to be the one embodiment of the Divine Power. What struck Ward in my father's play was the

clear and impressive manner in which he had brought out Becket's feeling that in accepting the Archbishopric he had changed masters, that he was not simply advanced to a higher service of the same liege lord, but that he had changed his former lord paramount, whose fiery self-will made havoc of his fine intellect, for one of higher degree; and had become a power distinct from and it might be antagonistic to the King. Thus Becket says, still loving his old friend:

> The worldly bond between us is dissolved,
> Not yet the love: can I be under him
> As Chancellor? as Archbishop over him?

My father's view of Becket was as follows: Becket was a really great and impulsive man, with a firm sense of duty, and, when he renounced the world, looked upon himself as the head of that Church which was the people's "tower of strength, their bulwark against throne and baronage." This idea so far wrought in his dominant nature as to betray him into many rash acts; and later he lost himself in the idea. His enthusiasm reached a spiritual ecstasy which carries the historian along with it; and his humanity and abiding tenderness for the poor, the weak and the unprotected, heighten the impression so much as to make the poet feel passionately the wronged Rosamund's reverential devotion for him (most touchingly rendered by Ellen Terry), when she kneels praying over his body in Canterbury Cathedral.[1]

[1] In the play Rosamund is the king's wife by a left-handed or morganatic marriage (see Miss Strickland's *Lives of Queens of England*, vol. i.).

As a stage tragedy (adapted by Irving) Irving has told us that *Becket* is one of the three most successful plays produced by him at the Lyceum. Palgrave has observed that *Becket* has two excellent characteristics of the old Greek drama, that of bringing the four protagonists prominently throughout before the audience: and that of introducing the crisis of the tragedy in a scene of first-rate comedy. Irving's arrangement has been criticised as too episodical; but the thread of human interest remains strong enough for its purpose, as from first to last it holds the audience in an attitude of rapt attention. Assuredly Irving's interpretation of the many-sided, many-mooded, statesman-soldier-saint was as vivid and as subtle a piece of acting as has been seen in our day.

He said truly that one of the chief keynotes of the character is to be found in the following lines, which he always gave with an indescribable tenderness, as if looking back to and recalling the daydream of his youth.

BECKET. There was a little fair-hair'd Norman maid,
Lived in my mother's house: if Rosamund is
The world's rose, as her name imports her — she
Was the world's lily.

JOHN OF SALISBURY. Ay, and what of her?

BECKET. She died of leprosy.

JOHN OF SALISBURY. I know not why
You call these old things back again, my lord.

BECKET. The drowning man, they say, remembers all
The chances of his life, just ere he dies.

In 1879 Irving refused the play: but in 1891 he

asked leave to produce it, holding that the taste of the theatre-going public had changed in the interval, and that it was now likely to be a success on the stage.

He writes to me (1893):

We have passed the fiftieth performance of *Becket*, which is in the heyday of its success. I think that I may, without hereafter being credited with any inferior motive, give again the opinion which I previously expressed to your loved and honoured father. To me *Becket* is a very noble play, with something of that lofty feeling and that far-reaching influence, which belong to a "passion play." There are in it moments of passion and pathos which are the aim and end of dramatic art, and which, when they exist, atone to an audience for the endurance of long acts. Some of the scenes and passages, especially in the last act, are full of sublime feeling, and are with regard to both their dramatic effectiveness and their poetic beauty as fine as anything in our language. I know that such a play has an ennobling influence on both the audience who see it and the actors who play in it.

Some of the last lines which my father ever wrote are at the end of the Northampton scene, an anthem-speech written for Irving:

The voice of the Lord is in the voice of the people.
The voice of the Lord is on the warring flood,
And He will lead His people into peace!
The voice of the Lord will shake the wilderness,
The barren wilderness of unbelief!
The voice of the Lord will break the cedar-trees,
The Kings and Rulers that have closed their ears

Against the Voice, and at their hour of doom
The voice of the Lord will hush the hounds of Hell
In everlasting silence.

Becket was produced at the Lyceum Feb. 6th, 1893, the parts of Becket and Rosamund being played by Irving and Ellen Terry. It had a long run, and was afterwards frequently played in the provinces and America. Irving wrote on the outside of his copy of *Becket*, "A finer play than *King John*." The incidental music was written by Sir Charles Stanford. His identification of Becket with the Gregorian melody "Telluris ingens conditor" is particularly impressive.

p. 5. (Prologue.) Becket as chess-player. John of Salisbury and Fitzstephen describe him as an accomplished chess-player, a master in hunting and falconry, and other manly exercises.

p. 9. lines 6, 7. (Prologue.)

nor my confessor yet.
I would to God thou wert.

Archbishop Theobald writes to Becket (John of Salisbury, *Ep.* 78): "It sounds in the ears and mouths of people that you and the king are one heart and soul." He helped Henry to improve the state of the country, and to lighten many of the oppressive laws and enactments (Lingard, vol. ii.).

p. 9. line 15. (Prologue.) *A dish-designer.* When Becket went to Paris, all the French were astonished at his sumptuous living. One dish

of eels alone was said to have cost 100 shillings (Fitzstephen, 197, 8, 9).

p. 28. (Act I. Sc. i.) *Chamber barely furnished.* John of Salisbury says, "Consecratus autem statim veterem exuit hominem, cilicium et monachum induit."

p. 30. line 1. (Act I. Sc. i.) *scutage.* The acceptance of a money compensation for military service dates from this time (1159). See Freeman's *Norman Conquest.*

p. 49. (Act I. Sc. iii.) In this great scene at Northampton (J. R. Green writes) "his life was said to be in danger, and all urged him to submit. But in the presence of danger the courage of the man rose to its full height. Grasping his archiepiscopal cross he entered the royal court, forbade the nobles to condemn him, and appealed to the Papal See. Shouts of 'Traitor! traitor!' followed him as he retired. The Primate turned fiercely at the word: 'Were I a knight,' he retorted, 'my sword should answer that foul taunt.'" — *Short History of the English People*, p. 108.

p. 52. (Act I. Sc. iii.) "He (Henry II.) wished to put an end to the disgraceful state of things which had arisen, by subjecting clerical offenders against the public peace to the same jurisdiction with the criminals, and, with a view to this, he now required that clerks accused of

any outrage should be tried in his own courts; that, on conviction or confession, they should be degraded by the Church, and that they then should be remanded to the secular offices for the execution of the sentence which had been passed upon them. On the other hand, the Archbishop, although unsupported by his brethren in general, who dreaded a risk of a breach with the State while the Church was divided by a schism, considered himself bound to offer the most strenuous resistance to a proposal which tended to lessen the privileges of the hierarchy; and on this quarrel the whole of the subsequent history turned." (*Becket*, by Canon Robertson, pp. 76, 77.)

p. 60. line 5. (Act I. Sc. iii.)

False to myself—it is the will of God.

"It is the Lord's will that I perjure myself" (Foliot, v. 271, 2).

p. 68. line 13. (Act I. Sc. iii.)

A worldly follower of the worldly strong.

Foliot fasted much, and was famous for his learning, for his subtle trickery, and flattery of persons in high station. When he was plotting against Becket, he is said to have heard "an exceeding terrible voice:

O Gilberte Foliot
Dum resolvis tot et tot,
Deus tuus est Ashtaroth."

(Roger Wendover, ii. 323.)

p. 71. line 9. (Act I. Sc. iii.) *Hence, Satan!* See Alan of Tewkesbury, i. 347.

p. 76. lines 8, 9. (Act I. Sc. iv.)
But I that threw the mightiest knight of France, Sir Engelram de Trie.

In 1159 Becket, in cuirass and helmet, marched at the head of his troops against the County of Toulouse, which had passed to Henry on his marriage with Eleanor, and there he unhorsed in single combat Sir Engelram de Trie.

p. 77. line 3. (Act I. Sc. iv.)
Deal gently with the young man Absalom.
(Fitzstephen, i. 236; Foliot, iii. 280; Roger of Hoveden, 284.)

p. 81. (Act I. Sc. iv.) For Becket's entertainment of the poor and his washing of their feet see Fitzstephen, 204; John of Salisbury, 324; Herbert of Bosham, 24. My father regretted the excision of this scene and of his Walter Map scenes from the Acting Edition.

p. 84. line 13. (Act I. Sc. iv.) *I must fly to France to-night.* Not long after he landed in France, under the assumed name of Brother Christian, a boy, who was standing by the roadside with a hawk on his wrist, was attracted by the evident pleasure with which the stranger eyed his bird, and cried out, "Here goes the Archbishop." At Gravelines the landlord of the

inn where he spent the night had longer time for observation, and recognised him, as Herbert of Bosham says, "by his remarkably tall figure, his high forehead, the stern expression of his beautiful countenance, and, above all, by the exquisite delicacy of his hands" (Hurrell Froude's *Remains*, vol. iv. p. 91).

p. 94. lines 2, 3. (Act II. Sc. i.)

I have sent his folk,
His kin, all his belongings overseas.

Edward Grim of Cambridge writes: "Those of whom God especially styles Himself the Father and Judge– orphans, widows, children altogether innocent, and unknowing of any discord, aged men, women with their little ones hanging at their breasts, clerks, and lay folk of whatever age and sex, of the Archbishop's kindred, and some of his friends, were seized in the depth of winter, and mercilessly transported beyond sea, after having been obliged to swear that they would seek him out" (Grim, 1–51).

p. 110. line 5. (Act II. Sc. ii.) *Saving God's honour.* Becket substituted this phrase in place of "salvo ordine nostro," which had been objected to by Henry. The King would not allow any difference, and burst into uncontrollable fury (John of Salisbury, ii). Becket wrote to the Pope after Montmirail: "We answered . . . we were prepared to yield him (the king)

every service, even more than our predecessors had done saving my order; but that new obligations, unbeknown to the Church, and such as my predecessors were never bound by, ought not to be undertaken by us: first, because it was bad as a precedent; secondly, because, when in the city of Sens, your Holiness' self absolved me from the observance of these Usages, hateful to God and to the Church, and from the pledge which force and fear had extorted from me in a special manner; and after a grave rebuke, which, by God's grace, shall never pass from my mind, prohibited me from ever again obliging myself to any one on a like cause except saving God's honour and my order. You added too, if you are pleased to recollect, that not even to save his life should a Bishop oblige himself, saving God's honour and his order" (Hurrell Froude's *Remains*, vol. iv. p. 389).

p. 113. line 16. (Act II. Sc. ii.) *let a stranger spoil his heritage.* Cf. Psalm cix.

p. 115. line 3 ff. (Act II. Sc. ii.) My father's note is: "The description of Bosham was made as we (my son Hallam and I) saw the little fishing village on a summer's day."

p. 143. line 4. (Act III. Sc. iii.)

The daughter of Zion lies beside the way.

Lamentations i–ii.

p. 143. lines 3, 4. (Act III. Sc. iii.)

The spouse of the Great King, thy king, hath fallen—
The daughter of Zion lies beside the way.

See Becket's Ep. i. 63, in Hurrell Froude's *Remains*, iv. 139. The Archbishop to the King of England: "I entreat you, O my Lord, to bear with me for a while that by the grace of God I may disburden my conscience, to the benefit of my soul. . . . My Lord, the daughter of Zion is held captive in thy kingdom. The spouse of the Great King is oppressed by her enemies, afflicted by those who ought most to honour her, and especially by you."

See, too, the Archbishop of Canterbury to the Pope (after Fréteval), Hurrell Froude's *Remains*, iv. 503: "God hath looked with an eye of pity on His Church, and changed at length her sorrow into joy. The King of England, as soon as he had received your last letters, and understood that you would no longer spare him, even as you had not spared the Emperor Frederic, but would lay his territories under an Interdict, forthwith made peace with us, to the honour of God, as we would hope, and the great advantage of His Church. The Usages which were once so insisted upon, he did not even allude to. He exacted no oath of us, or any belonging to us. He restored to us the possessions

which we had been deprived of, according to the enumeration of them in our own schedule; and, with them, peace and security, and a return from our exile to all our companions; and even promised the kiss, if we wished to press him so far. In short he gave way in everything, insomuch that some called him perjured, who had heard him swear that he would not admit us to the kiss that day."

p. 144. line 8. (Act III. Sc. iii.)

And thou shalt crown my Henry o'er again.

Upon this Becket dismounted and prepared to throw himself at Henry's feet, but Henry also dismounted, and embraced the Archbishop, and held his stirrup for him in order that he might remount.

p. 155. (Act IV. Sc. ii.) "That Rosamund was not killed may be ascertained by the charters . . ." (see vol. i. p. 213, Miss Strickland's *Lives of Queens of England*).

p. 188. line 17. (Act v. Sc. ii.) *uxor pauperis Ibyci* (Horace, *Carm.* III. xv. 1).

p. 191. line 2. (Act. v. Sc. ii.) From "*On a Tuesday was I born*" to the end of the play is founded on the graphic accounts by Fitzstephen, and Grim, the monk of Cambridge, who was with Becket in Scenes ii. and iii.

p. 199. line 12. (Act v. Sc. ii.) [*When God makes up his jewels.* Malachi iii. 17.—ED.]

APPENDIX TO NOTES ON BECKET.

Letter from The Right Honourable J. Bryce.

As I have been abroad for some time it was only a little while ago that I obtained and read your *Becket*. Will you, since you were so kind as to read me some of it last July, let me tell you how much enjoyment and light it has given me? Impressive as were the parts read, it impresses one incomparably more when studied as a whole. One cannot imagine a more vivid, a more perfectly faithful picture than it gives both of Henry and of Thomas. Truth in history is naturally truth in poetry; but you have made the characters of the two men shine out in a way which, while it never deviates from the impression history gives of them, goes beyond and perfects history. This is eminently conspicuous in the way their relations to one another are traced; and in the delineation of the influence on Thomas of the conception of the Church, blending with his own haughty spirit and sanctifying it to his own conscience. There is not, it seems to me, anything in modern poetry which helps us to realise, as your drama does, the sort of power the Church exerted on her ministers: and this is the central fact of the earlier middle ages. I wish you were writing a play on Hildebrand also. Venturing to say this to you from the point of view of a student of history,

I scarcely presume to speak of the drama on its more purely literary side, how full of strength and beauty and delicacy it is, because you must have heard this often already from more competent critics.

BECKET.[1]

By the late Sir Richard Jebb.

It is almost impossible that Tennyson should surpass himself; the poet of *In Memoriam*, of *Maud*, and of the *Idylls* has no rival to fear in the author of *Queen Mary*, of *Harold*, and now of *Becket*. It is almost equally incredible that he should fall appreciably below himself. We shall not attempt, therefore, to compare *Becket* with its dramatic predecessors, still less shall we attempt to determine Tennyson's relative position in the dramatic literature of his country. Such judgments need time and reflection; in their final shape they can hardly, perhaps, be pronounced by contemporaries at all. The great business of the critic, says Mr. Matthew Arnold somewhere, is to get himself out of the way, and let humanity decide. If ever that maxim is worthy of observation, it is when a great poet in his maturity gives to the world a work so important as *Becket*.

Tennyson is no antiquarian dramatist. Like Shakespeare, he takes a broad and familiar historical outline, and uses it for a dramatic purpose. His object is to write a play, not to rewrite history. There is no

[1] From *The Times*, December 10, 1884.

subtle attempt to see new lights in Henry's character or Becket's policy. As Shakespeare drew his material sometimes from Holinshed, sometimes from North's *Plutarch*, and so forth, so Tennyson, though doubtless his studies have in reality gone far deeper, might almost seem to have sought his material in the few pages of Green's *Short History of the English People* which describe the characters and relations of Henry and Becket. But there is, on the other hand, this great difference between Shakespeare's "histories" and Tennyson's latest historical play. Shakespeare's plays were written for the stage, and were meant to be acted. *Becket* is not, in Tennyson's judgment—to judge from the short dedicatory letter to the Lord Chancellor prefixed to the play—adapted in its published form for actual representation. "My dear Selborne," so runs the letter,

> To you, the honoured Chancellor of our own day, I dedicate this dramatic memorial of your great predecessor; —which, altho' not intended in its present form to meet the exigencies of our modern theatre, has nevertheless—for so you have assured me—won your approbation. Ever yours, TENNYSON.

We find it easier to agree with the approbation of the Chancellor than with the judgment of the Laureate. *Becket* may not be intended in its published form to meet the exigencies of the modern stage—that may be a merit or a defect according to the point of view—but it is a fine poem and a stirring drama, and perhaps, in expressing his intentions in regard to it, Tennyson has rather judged the capacities and opportunities of

the modern stage than the merits and capabilities of his own performance.

The general dramatic outline of *Becket* is, as we have indicated, determined by the familiar facts of history. The murder of the great Prelate in Canterbury Cathedral furnishes the necessary catastrophe, and the general relations of Becket with his King provide an effective introduction thereto. The web of tragical circumstance is provided by the skilful interweaving—for which, we presume, the poet himself is responsible—of the King's love for Rosamund with the jealousy of Eleanor. The play is in five Acts, according to precedent, but a Prologue is prefixed in which the action is foreshadowed. In our judgment, this Prologue contains some of the most powerful writing in the play. It opens in Normandy, where the King is found playing a game of chess with Becket as he receives the news of Theobald's —Becket's predecessor's—illness and impending death. At first, almost in jest, but afterwards with determined purpose, the King proposes that Becket should be the successor of the dying Primate. We quote the opening scene at some length. Henry and Becket are at chess :—

HENRY.

So then our good Archbishop Theobald
Lies dying.

BECKET.

I am grieved to know as much.

HENRY.

But we must have a mightier man than he
For his successor.

BECKET.

Have you thought of one?

HENRY.

A cleric lately poison'd his own mother,
And being brought before the courts of the Church,
They but degraded him. I hope they whipt him.
I would have hang'd him.

BECKET.

It is your move.

HENRY.

Well—there. [*Moves.*
The Church in the pell-mell of Stephen's time
Hath climb'd the throne and almost clutch'd the crown;
But by the royal customs of our realm
The Church should hold her baronies of me,
Like other lords amenable to law.
I'll have them written down and made the law.

BECKET.

My liege, I move my bishop.

HENRY.

And if I live,
No man without my leave shall excommunicate
My tenants or my household.

BECKET.

Look to your king.

HENRY.

No man without my leave shall cross the seas
To set the Pope against me—I pray your pardon.

BECKET.

Well—will you move?

HENRY.

There. [*Moves.*

BECKET.

Check—you move so wildly.

HENRY.

There, then ! [*Moves.*

BECKET.

Why—there then, for you see my bishop
Hath brought your king to a standstill. You are beaten.

HENRY (*kicks over the board*).

Why, there then—down go bishop and king together.
I loathe being beaten; had I fixt my fancy
Upon the game I should have beaten thee,
But that was vagabond.

BECKET.

Where, my liege? With Phryne,
Or Lais, or thy Rosamund, or another?

HENRY.

My Rosamund is no Lais, Thomas Becket;
And yet she plagues me too—no fault in her—
But that I fear the Queen would have her life.

BECKET.

Put her away, put her away, my liege !
Put her away into a nunnery!
Safe enough there from her to whom thou art bound

By Holy Church. And wherefore should she seek
The life of Rosamund Clifford more
Than that of other paramours of thine?

HENRY.

How dost thou know I am not wedded to her?

BECKET.

How should I know?

HENRY.

That is my secret, Thomas.

BECKET.

State secrets should be patent to the statesman
Who serves and loves his king, and whom the king
Loves not as statesman, but true lover and friend.

HENRY.

Come, come, thou art but deacon, not yet bishop,
No, nor archbishop, nor my confessor yet.
I would to God thou wert, for I should find
An easy father confessor in thee.

BECKET.

St. Denis, that thou shouldst not. I should beat
Thy kingship as my bishop hath beaten it.

HENRY.

Hell take thy bishop then, and my kingship too!

Henry then confides to Becket his plans for the seclusion of Rosamund, bespeaking the good offices of his favourite in screening her from the jealousy

of the Queen, and afterwards passes to the question of Theobald's successor. Becket deprecates his own nomination, and shows, by a variety of hints and signs, that as Archbishop he would further the King's wishes and designs only so far as he might do so, to borrow the watchword of his Primacy, while "saving the honour of his order." Their dialogue is interrupted by the entry of Queen Eleanor, accompanied by Sir Reginald Fitzurse, one of the dispossessed barons, who, according to the scheme of the play, had formerly aspired to the love of Rosamund and been slighted by her. The Queen sees on the table the plan of Rosamund's bower, which Henry had just been explaining to Becket. This provokes her jealous and whimsical temper, which finds expression in the following powerful scene :—

ELEANOR.

Over! the sweet summer closes,
The reign of the roses is done;
Over and gone with the roses,
And over and gone with the sun.

Here ; but our sun in Aquitaine lasts longer. I would I were in Aquitaine again—your north chills me.

Over! the sweet summer closes,
And never a flower at the close;
Over and gone with the roses,
And winter again and the snows.

That was not the way I ended it first—but unsymmetrically, preposterously, illogically, out of passion, without art —like a song of the people. Will you have it? The last

Parthian shaft of a forlorn Cupid at the King's left breast, and all left-handedness and under-handedness.

And never a flower at the close,
Over and gone with the roses,
Not over and gone with the rose.

True, one rose will out-blossom the rest, one rose in a bower. I speak after my fancies, for I am a Troubadour, you know, and won the violet at Toulouse; but my voice is harsh here, not in tune, a nightingale out of season; for marriage, rose or no rose, has killed the golden violet.

BECKET.

Madam, you do ill to scorn wedded love.

ELEANOR.

So I do. Louis of France loved me, and I dreamed that I loved Louis of France: and I loved Henry of England, and Henry of England dreamed that he loved me; but the marriage-garland withers even with the putting on, the bright link rusts with the breath of the first after-marriage kiss, the harvest moon is the ripening of the harvest, and the honeymoon is the gall of love; he dies of his honeymoon. I could pity this poor world myself that it is no better ordered.

HENRY.

Dead, is he, my Queen? What, altogether? Let me swear nay to that by this cross on thy neck. God's eyes! what a lovely cross! what jewels!

ELEANOR.

Doth it please you? Take it and wear it on that hard heart of yours—there. [*Gives it to him.*

HENRY (*puts it on*).

On this left breast before so hard a heart,
To hide the scar left by thy Parthian dart.

ELEANOR.

Has my simple song set you jingling? Nay, if I took and translated that hard heart into our Provençal facilities, I could so play about it with the rhyme——

HENRY.

That the heart were lost in the rhyme and the matter in the metre. May we not pray you, madam, to spare us the hardness of your facility?

ELEANOR.

The wells of Castaly are not wasted upon the desert. We did but jest.

HENRY.

There's no jest on the brows of Herbert there. What is it, Herbert?

Enter HERBERT OF BOSHAM.

HERBERT.

My liege, the good Archbishop is no more.

HENRY.

Peace to his soul!

HERBERT.

I left him with peace on his face—that sweet other-world smile, which will be reflected in the spiritual body among the angels. But he longed much to see your Grace and the Chancellor ere he past, and his last words

were a commendation of Thomas Becket to your Grace as his successor in the archbishopric.

HENRY.

Ha, Becket! thou rememberest our talk?

BECKET.

My heart is full of tears—I have no answer.

HENRY.

Well, well, old men must die, or the world would grow mouldy, would only breed the past again. Come to me to-morrow. Thou hast but to hold out thy hand. Meanwhile the revenues are mine. A-hawking, a-hawking! If I sit, I grow fat. [*Leaps over the table, and exit.*

The Prologue closes with a conversation between Eleanor and Fitzurse, in which the Queen urges the latter to seek out Rosamund's retreat, and to "make her as hateful to herself and to the King as she is to me." In the First Act, Becket is already Archbishop, and begins to disclose the change of his relations towards the King, which his new position, aided by his temperament, prone to ecclesiastical domination, forces upon him. "Thou art the man," says Herbert of Bosham, his friend, "be thou a mightier Anselm." To which Becket replies:

I do believe thee, then. I am the man.
And yet I seem appall'd—on such a sudden
At such an eagle-height I stand and see
The rift that runs between me and the King.
I served our Theobald well when I was with him;
I served King Henry well as Chancellor;

I am his no more, and I must serve the Church.
This Canterbury is only less than Rome,
And all my doubts I fling from me like dust,
Winnow and scatter all scruples to the wind,
And all the puissance of the warrior,
And all the wisdom of the Chancellor,
And all the heap'd experiences of life,
I cast upon the side of Canterbury—
Our holy mother Canterbury, who sits
With tatter'd robes. Laics and barons, thro'
The random gifts of careless kings, have graspt
Her livings, her advowsons, granges, farms,
And goodly acres—we will make her whole;
Not one rood lost. And for these Royal customs,
These ancient Royal customs—they *are* Royal,
Not of the Church—and let them be anathema,
And all that speak for them anathema.

As a sign of his changed demeanour Becket resolves forthwith to send back the Great Seal to the King, and this done the scene rapidly changes to the Council of Northampton, where the Archbishop at first refuses and then consents to sign the Constitutions or Customs proposed by the King, and finally declining to ratify his signature by his seal he is driven to fly from the country and to pass into banishment. The succession of scenes which we have here passed hastily over is full of fine passages eminently illustrative of Tennyson's dramatic versatility and variety. We despair of doing them justice by quotation, but we cannot omit the following extract from the King's address to his Council:—

Barons and bishops of our realm of England,
After the nineteen winters of King Stephen—
A reign which was no reign, when none could sit
By his own hearth in peace; when murder common
As nature's death, like Egypt's plague, had fill'd
All things with blood; when every doorway blush'd,
Dash'd red with that unhallow'd passover;
When every baron ground his blade in blood;
The household dough was kneaded up with blood;
The millwheel turn'd in blood; the wholesome plow
Lay rusting in the furrow's yellow weeds,
Till famine dwarft the race—I came, your King!
Nor dwelt alone, like a soft lord of the East,
In mine own hall, and sucking thro' fools' ears
The flatteries of corruption—went abroad
Thro' all my counties, spied my people's ways;
Yea, heard the churl against the baron—yea,
And did him justice; sat in mine own courts
Judging my judges, that had found a King
Who ranged confusions, made the twilight day,
And struck a shape from out the vague, and law
From madness. And the event—our fallows till'd,
Much corn, repeopled towns, a realm again.
So far my course, albeit not glassy-smooth,
Had prosper'd in the main, but suddenly
Jarr'd on this rock. A cleric violated
The daughter of his host, and murder'd him.
Bishops—York, London, Chichester, Westminster—
Ye haled this tonsured devil into your courts;
But since your canon will not let you take
Life for a life, ye but degraded him
Where I had hang'd him. What doth hard murder care

For degradation? and that made me muse,
Being bounden by my coronation oath
To do men justice.

In the Second Act Rosamund herself is first introduced. It consists of two scenes only, the first between Henry and Rosamund in the bower, the second, in sharp contrast to it, being the attempted reconciliation between Henry and Becket at the meeting of the Kings at Montmirail. In the first Rosamond pleads for Becket and obtains from the King as a gift the fateful cross which Eleanor had given him. Her pleading is unheeded and Henry parts from her with an evasion. In the scene at Montmirail the reconciliation is almost accomplished when it is frustrated by Becket's stubbornness and the King's passionate temper:

HENRY.

Ah, Thomas, Thomas,
Thou art thyself again, Thomas again.

BECKET (*rising*).

Saving God's honour!

HENRY.

Out upon thee, man!
Saving the Devil's honour, his yes and no.
Knights, bishops, earls, this London spawn—by Mahound,
I had sooner have been born a Mussulman—
Less clashing with their priests—
I am half-way down the slope—will no man stay me?
I dash myself to pieces—I stay myself—
Puff—it is gone. You, Master Becket, you

That owe to me your power over me—
Nay, nay—
Brother of France, you have taken, cherish'd him
Who thief-like fled from his own church by night,
No man pursuing. I would have had him back.
Take heed he do not turn and rend you too:
For whatsoever may displease him—that
Is clean against God's honour—a shift, a trick
Whereby to challenge, face me out of all
My regal rights. Yet, yet—that none may dream
I go against God's honour—ay, or himself
In any reason, choose
A hundred of the wisest heads from England,
A hundred, too, from Normandy and Anjou:
Let these decide on what was customary
In olden days, and all the Church of France
Decide on their decision, I am content.
More, what the mightiest and the holiest
Of all his predecessors may have done
Ev'n to the least and meanest of my own,
Let him do the same to me—I am content.

In the Third Act we return again to Rosamund's bower, and the first note of her impending fate is struck in the whimsical rustic song of her seeming-silent but garrulous waiting-maid Margery:

Babble in bower
Under the rose!
Bee mustn't buzz,
Whoop—but he knows.
Kiss me, little one,
Nobody near!

Grasshopper, grasshopper,
Whoop—you can hear.

Kiss in the bower,
Tit on the tree!
Bird mustn't tell,
Whoop—he can see.

Eleanor has at last tracked Rosamund to her retreat, but the catastrophe of the underplot is reserved for a tremendous scene in the Fourth Act, and before its *dénouement* is reached the scene changes to the Traitor's Meadow at Fréteval, where Becket, though at last outwardly reconciled to the King, begins to feel a presentiment of the fate that awaits him. He turns a deaf ear to the remonstrances of Walter Map, who urges conciliation and compromise, and thus reveals the full scope of his pretensions and aspirations:

No! To die for it—
I live to die for it, I die to live for it.
The State will die, the Church can never die.
The King's not like to die for that which dies;
But I must die for that which never dies.
It will be so—my visions in the Lord:
It must be so, my friend! the wolves of England
Must murder her one shepherd, that the sheep
May feed in peace. False figure, Map would say.
Earth's falses are heaven's truths. And when my voice
Is martyr'd mute, and this man disappears,
That perfect trust may come again between us,
And there, there, there, not here I shall rejoice
To find my stray sheep back within the fold.

The crowd are scattering, let us move away !
And thence to England.

In the opening of the Fourth Act Queen Eleanor penetrates Rosamund's bower by following the guidance of Rosamund's child, Geoffrey, who has strayed beyond the forbidden precincts. She proffers to Rosamund the choice of a dagger or of poison, but Rosamund pleads for her life and that of her child. Eleanor's terms are hard and her taunting bitter :

ELEANOR.

Will you not say you are not married to him?

ROSAMUND.

Ay, madam, I can *say* it, if you will.

ELEANOR.

Then is thy pretty boy a bastard ?

ROSAMUND.

No.

ELEANOR.

And thou thyself a proven wanton ?

ROSAMUND.

No.
I am none such. I never loved but one.
I have heard of such that range from love to love
Like the wild beast—if you can call it love.
I have heard of such—yea, even among those
Who sit on thrones—I never saw any such,

Never knew any such, and howsoever
You do misname me, match'd with any such,
I am snow to mud.

ELEANOR.

The more the pity then
That thy true home—the heavens—cry out for thee
Who art too pure for earth.

Then the base Fitzurse, who has accompanied Eleanor, strives to renew his rejected suit to Rosamund. "Give her to me," he says, and Eleanor offers Rosamund her life on these degrading terms:

Take thy one chance;
Catch at the last straw. Kneel to thy lord Fitzurse;
Crouch even because thou hatest him; fawn upon him
For thy life and thy son's.

ROSAMUND (*rising*).

I am a Clifford,
My son a Clifford and Plantagenet.
I am to die, then, tho' there stand beside thee
One who might grapple with thy dagger, if he
Had aught of man, or thou of woman; or I
Would bow to such a baseness as would make me
Most worthy of it: both of us will die,
And I will fly with my sweet boy to heaven,
And shriek to all the saints among the stars:
'Eleanor of Aquitaine, Eleanor of England!
Murder'd by that adulteress Eleanor,
Whose doings are a horror to the east,
A hissing in the west!' Have we not heard
Raymond of Poitou, thine own uncle—nay,

Geoffrey Plantagenet, thine own husband's father—
Nay, ev'n the accursed heathen Saladdeen—
Strike !
I challenge thee to meet me before God.
Answer me there.

ELEANOR (*raising the dagger*).
This in thy bosom, fool,
And after in thy bastard's !

(*Enter* BECKET *from behind. Catches hold of her arm.*)

BECKET.
Murderess !

Becket's arrival arrests the murder of Rosamund, and he persuades her, according to the alternative legend, to take refuge in the nunnery at Godstow. This proves in the end his own undoing, for Eleanor goes back to the King in France, and, showing him the cross, her own gift to him, which she had wrested from Rosamund in the bower, persuades him that Rosamund has sent it back to him because she is dead to earth and dead henceforth to him, and mockingly hints that Becket has sent her to Godstow because he loves her himself. This calls forth from Henry the following burst of passion, almost Æschylean in its intensity and audacity :—

To put her into Godstow nunnery !
He dared not—liar ! yet, yet I remember—
I do remember.
He bad me put her into a nunnery—
Into Godstow, into Hellstow, Devilstow!

The Church! the Church!
God's eyes! I would the Church were down in hell!

. . . . .

No man to love me, honour me, obey me!
Sluggards and fools!
The slave that eat my bread has kick'd his King!
The dog I cramm'd with dainties worried me!
The fellow that on a lame jade came to court,
A ragged cloak for saddle—he, he, he,
To shake my throne, to push into my chamber—
My bed, where ev'n the slave is private—he—
I'll have her out again, he shall absolve
The bishops—they but did my will—not you—
Sluggards and fools, why do you stand and stare?
You are no king's men—you—you—you are Becket's men.
Down with King Henry! up with the Archbishop!
Will no man free me from this pestilent priest?

The fatal words are spoken in the hearing of Becket's enemies, Fitzurse, De Brito, De Tracy, and De Morville, and thus the catastrophe is prepared. The murderers seek Becket at Canterbury and summon him to submit himself to the King. Becket defies them:

Ye think to scare me from my loyalty
To God and to the Holy Father. No!
Tho' all the swords in England flash'd above me
Ready to fall at Henry's word or yours—
Tho' all the loud-lung'd trumpets upon earth
Blared from the heights of all the thrones of her kings,
Blowing the world against me, I would stand
Clothed with the full authority of Rome,
Mail'd in the perfect panoply of faith,

> First of the foremost of their files, who die
> For God, to people heaven in the great day
> When God makes up his jewels.

And so his proud defiance lasts until the tragic end, the circumstances of which no one who has read English history, and no one who in future reads English poetry, is likely to forget.

We have said enough and quoted enough to show that *Becket* is a work eminently worthy of Tennyson's genius and fame. It is dramatic in its conception and execution, full of poetry and fire; its versification is strong and varied in cadence, and its several episodes are well conceived and skilfully woven together. Of the songs in the play we have given two specimens, selected rather for their importance in relation to its dramatic development than for their intrinsic lyrical excellence. In this latter respect, though their merit is not inconsiderable, they are surpassed no doubt both in poetry and music by the exquisite duet which opens the Second Act, and certainly they cannot compare with many of Tennyson's earlier lyrical efforts. But it is no real demerit in songs inserted in a dramatic poem that they are rather appropriate to the dramatic evolution of the play than gems whose independent lustre might easily outshine their setting. There are many questions to be asked in judging of an historical drama. Does it illustrate the history on which it is based without slavishly adhering to its details? Are its characters broadly and firmly conceived and consistently developed? Is it really dramatic in conception, and does the imagina-

tion fuse its component parts into a coherent unity of execution? If these questions can be answered in the affirmative—and we think they can in the case of *Becket*—the result is a play which, whether it is adapted to meet the exigencies of the modern theatre or not, is a genuine and important addition to the permanent treasures of English literature. There have been times in the history of the English drama when no play of Shakespeare would have held the stage for a week. It is probable enough that there are many plays of Shakespeare which would fail to hold the stage at the present time. But the fault lies not so much in Shakespeare, who wrote for the stage of his time and understood it, as in the changed condition of the stage. So again it is doubtful whether *Hernani*, for instance, would in an English dress attract an English audience; while it is certain that Racine appeals for the most part to a taste which is not English. It is thus easy to see that there are varieties and degrees of dramatic excellence, and that the criterion of successful performance on the actual stage is only one of the tests whereby a dramatic work of serious and permanent pretensions is to be tried. But whatever test we apply we can confidently express our conviction that *Becket* is a drama of great power, finely conceived and finely executed, as well as a poem of great and varied beauty.

BECKET

A TRAGEDY

IN A PROLOGUE AND FOUR ACTS

BY

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

AS ARRANGED FOR THE STAGE

BY

HENRY IRVING

AND AFTERWARDS SUBMITTED TO THE AUTHOR
AND PRESENTED AT THE LYCEUM THEATRE
ON 6TH FEBRUARY 1893

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Thomas Becket	*Chancellor of England (afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury)*	Mr. IRVING
Henry II.	*King of England*	Mr. WILLIAM TERRISS
King Louis of France		Mr. BOND
Gilbert Foliot	*Bishop of London*	Mr. LACY
Roger	*Archbishop of York*	Mr. BEAUMONT
Bishop of Hereford		Mr. CUSHING
Hilary	*Bishop of Chichester*	Mr. ARCHER
John of Salisbury	*Friends of Becket*	Mr. BISHOP
Herbert of Bosham	*Friends of Becket*	Mr. HAVILAND
Edward Grim	*A monk of Cambridge*	Mr. W. J. HOLLOWAY
Sir Reginald Fitzurse	*The Four Knights of the King's household, enemies of Becket*	Mr. FRANK COOPER
Sir Richard de Brito	*The Four Knights of the King's household, enemies of Becket*	Mr. TYARS
Sir William de Tracy	*The Four Knights of the King's household, enemies of Becket*	Mr. HAGUE
Sir Hugh de Morville	*The Four Knights of the King's household, enemies of Becket*	Mr. PERCIVAL
De Broc		Mr. TABB
Richard de Hastings	*Grand Prior of Templars*	Mr. SELDON
The Youngest Knight Templar		Mr. GORDON CRAIG
Lord Leicester		Mr. HARVEY
Philip de Eleemosyna	*The Pope's Almoner*	Mr. HOWE
Herald		Mr. L. BELMORE
Geoffrey	*Son of Rosamund and Henry*	Master LEO BYRNE
Retainers		Mr. YELDHAM Mr. LORRISS
Countrymen		Mr. JOHNSON Mr. REYNOLDS
John of Oxford	*Called the Swearer*	Mr. IAN ROBERTSON
Servant		Mr. DAVIS
Eleanor of Aquitane	*Queen of England, divorced from Louis of France*	MISS GENEVIEVE WARD
Margery		MISS KATE PHILLIPS
	AND	
Rosamund de Clifford		MISS ELLEN TERRY

Knights, Monks, Heralds, Soldiers, Retainers, etc.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENERY.

PROLOGUE.

SCENE 1	A Castle in Normandy	*W. Telbin*
SCENE 2	The Same	*W. Telbin*

ACT I.

SCENE 1	Becket's House in London	*J. Harker*
SCENE 2	Street in Northampton	*Hawes Craven*
SCENE 3	The Same	*Hawes Craven*
SCENE 4	The Hall in Northampton	*Hawes Craven*

ACT II.

SCENE 1	Rosamund's Bower	*Hawes Craven*

ACT III.

SCENE 1	"Meeting of the Kings," Montmirail	*Hawes Craven*
SCENE 2	Outside the Woods near Rosamund's Bower	*Hawes Craven*
SCENE 3	Rosamund's Bower	*Hawes Craven*

ACT IV.

SCENE 1	Castle in Normandy	*W. Telbin*
SCENE 2	A Room in Canterbury Monastery	*W. Telbin*
SCENE 3	North Transept of Canterbury Cathedral	*W. Telbin*

SCENE—France and England.

BECKET.

PROLOGUE.

SCENE I.—*A Castle in Normandy.*

ELEANOR. FITZURSE.

ELEANOR. Dost thou love this Becket, this son of a London merchant, that thou hast sworn a voluntary allegiance to him?

FITZURSE. Not for my love toward him, but because he had the love of the King. How should a baron love a beggar on horseback, with the retinue of three kings behind him, outroyalling royalty?

ELEANOR. Pride of the plebeian!

FITZURSE. And this plebeian like to be Archbishop!

ELEANOR. True, and I have an inherited loathing of these black sheep of the Papacy. Archbishop? I can see further into a man than our hot-headed Henry, and if there ever come feud between Church and Crown, and I do not then charm this secret out of our loyal Thomas, I am not Eleanor.

FITZURSE. Last night I followed a woman in the city here. Her face was veiled, but the back methought was Rosamund—his paramour, thy rival. I can feel for thee.

ELEANOR. Thou feel for me!—paramour—rival! No paramour but his own wedded wife! King Louis had no paramours, and I loved him none the more. Henry had many, and I loved him none the less. I would she were but his paramour, for men tire of their fancies; but I fear this one fancy hath taken root, and borne blossom too, and she, whom the King loves indeed, is a power in the State. Follow me this Rosamund day and night, whithersoever she goes; track her, if thou canst, even into the King's lodging, that I may [*clenches her fist*]—may at least have my cry against him and her,—and thou in thy way shouldst be jealous of the King, for thou in thy way didst once, what shall I call it, affect her thine own self.

FITZURSE. Ay, but the young filly winced and whinnied and flung up her heels; and then the king came honeying about her, and this Becket, her father's friend, like enough staved us from her.

ELEANOR. Us!

FITZURSE. Yea, by the Blessed Virgin! There were more than I buzzing round the blossom—De Tracy—even that flint De Brito.

ELEANOR. Carry her off among you; run in upon her and devour her, one and all of you; make her as hateful to herself and to the King, as she is to me.

FITZURSE. I and all would be glad to wreak our spite on the rosefaced minion of the King, and bring her to the level of the dust, so that the King——

ELEANOR. If thou light upon her—free me from her! —let her eat it like the serpent, and be driven out of her paradise.

SCENE 2.—*The Same.*

HENRY *and* BECKET *at chess.*

HENRY. So then our good Archbishop Theobald
Lies dying.

BECKET. I am grieved to know as much.

HENRY. But we must have a mightier man than he
For his successor.

BECKET. Have you thought of one?

HENRY. A cleric lately poison'd his own mother,
And being brought before the courts of the Church,
They but degraded him. I hope they whipt him.
I would have hang'd him.

BECKET. It is your move.

HENRY. Well—there. [*Moves.*
The Church in the pell-mell of Stephen's time
Hath climb'd the throne and almost clutch'd the crown;
But by the royal customs of our realm
The Church should hold her baronies of me,
Like other lords amenable to law.
I'll have them written down and made the law.

BECKET. My liege, I move my bishop.

HENRY. And if I live,
No man without my leave shall excommunicate
My tenants or my household.

BECKET. Look to your king.

HENRY. No man without my leave shall cross the seas
To set the Pope against me—I pray your pardon.

BECKET. Well—will you move?

HENRY. There. [*Moves.*

BECKET. Check—you move so wildly.

HENRY. There then! [*Moves.*

BECKET. Why—there then, for you see my bishop
Hath brought your king to a standstill. You are beaten.
HENRY. [*Kicks over the board.*] Why, there then—
down go bishop and king together.
I loathe being beaten; had I fixt my fancy
Upon the game I should have beaten thee,
But that was vagabond.
BECKET. Where, my liege? With Phryne,
Or Lais, or thy Rosamund, or another?
HENRY. My Rosamund is no Lais, Thomas Becket;
And yet she plagues me too—no fault in her—
But that I fear the Queen would have her life.
BECKET. Put her away, put her away, my liege!
Put her away into a nunnery!
Safe enough there from her to whom thou art bound
By Holy Church. And wherefore should she seek
The life of Rosamund de Clifford more
Than that of other paramours of thine?
HENRY. How dost thou know I am not wedded to her?
BECKET. How should I know?
HENRY. That is my secret, Thomas.
BECKET. State secrets should be patent to the statesman
Who serves and loves his king, and whom the king
Loves not as statesman, but true lover and friend.
HENRY. Come, come, thou art but deacon, not yet bishop,
No, nor archbishop, nor my confessor yet.
I would to God thou wert, for I should find
An easy father confessor in thee.
BECKET. St. Denis, that thou shouldst not. I should beat
Thy kingship as my bishop hath beaten it.
HENRY. Hell take thy bishop then, and my kingship too!

Come, come, I love thee and I know thee, I know thee,
A doter on white pheasant-flesh at feasts,
A sauce-deviser for thy days of fish,
A dish-designer, and most amorous
Of good old red sound liberal Gascon wine:
Will not thy body rebel, man, if thou flatter it?

BECKET. That palate is insane which cannot tell
A good dish from a bad, new wine from old.

HENRY. Well, who loves wine loves women.

BECKET. So I do.
Men are God's trees, and women are God's flowers;
And when the Gascon wine mounts to my head,
The trees are all the statelier, and the flowers
Are all the fairer.

HENRY. And thy thoughts, thy fancies?

BECKET. Good dogs, my liege, well trained, and easily call'd
Off from the game.

HENRY. Save for some once or twice,
When they ran down the game and worried it.

BECKET. No, my liege, no!—not once—in God's name, no!

HENRY. Nay, then, I take thee at thy word—believe thee
The veriest Galahad of old Arthur's hall.
And so this Rosamund, my true heart-wife,
Not Eleanor—she whom I love indeed
As a woman should be loved—Why dost thou smile
So dolorously?

BECKET. My good liege, if a man
Wastes himself among women, how should he love
A woman, as a woman should be loved?

HENRY. How shouldst thou know that never hast loved one?

Come, I would give her to thy care in England
When I am out in Normandy or Anjou.

BECKET. My lord, I am your subject, not your——

HENRY. Pander.
God's eyes! I know all that—not my purveyor
Of pleasures, but to save a life—her life;
Ay, and the soul of Eleanor from hell-fire.
I have built a secret bower in England, Thomas,
A nest in a bush.

BECKET. And where, my liege?

HENRY. [*Whispers.*] Thine ear.

BECKET. That's lone enough.

HENRY. [*Laying paper on table.*] This chart here mark'd "*Her Bower*,"
Take, keep it, friend. See, first, a circling wood,
A hundred pathways running everyway,
And then a brook, a bridge; and after that
This labyrinthine brickwork maze in maze,
And then another wood, and in the midst
A garden and my Rosamund. Look, this line—
The rest you see is colour'd green—but this
Draws thro' the chart to her.

BECKET. This blood-red line?

HENRY. Ay! blood, perchance, except thou see to her.

BECKET. And where is she? There in her English nest?

HENRY. Would God she were—no, here within the city.
We take her from her secret bower in Anjou
And pass her to her secret bower in England.
She is ignorant of all but that I love her.

BECKET. My liege, I pray thee let me hence: a widow
And orphan child, whom one of thy wild barons——

HENRY. Ay, ay, but swear to see to her in England.

BECKET. Well, well, I swear, but not to please myself.
HENRY. Whatever come between us?
BECKET. What should come
Between us, Henry?
HENRY. Nay—I know not, Thomas.
BECKET. What need then? Well—whatever come between us. [*Going.*
HENRY. A moment! thou didst help me to my throne
In Theobald's time, and after by thy wisdom
Hast kept it firm from shaking; but now I,
For my realm's sake, myself must be the wizard
To raise that tempest which will set it trembling
Only to base it deeper. I will have
My young son Henry crown'd the King of England,
That so the Papal bolt may pass by England,
As seeming his, not mine, and fall abroad.
I'll have it done—and now.
BECKET. Surely too young
Even for this shadow of a crown; and tho'
I love him heartily, I can spy already
A strain of hard and headstrong in him. Say,
The Queen should play his kingship against thine!
HENRY. I will not think so, Thomas. Who shall crown him?
Canterbury is dying.
BECKET. The next Canterbury.
HENRY. And who shall he be, my friend Thomas? Who?
BECKET. Name him; the Holy Father will confirm him.
HENRY. [*Lays his hand on* BECKET'S *shoulder.*] Here!
BECKET. Mock me not. I am not even a monk.
Thy jest—no more. Why—look—is this a sleeve
For an archbishop?

HENRY. But the arm within
Is Becket's, who hath beaten down my foes.
BECKET. A soldier's, not a spiritual arm.
HENRY. I lack a spiritual soldier, Thomas—
A man of this world and the next to boot.
BECKET. There's Gilbert Foliot.
HENRY. He! too thin, too thin.
Thou art the man to fill out the Church robe;
Your Foliot fasts and fawns too much for me.
BECKET. Roger of York.
HENRY. Roger is Roger of York.
King, Church, and State to him but foils wherein
To set that precious jewel, Roger of York.
No.
BECKET. Sire, the business
Of thy whole kingdom waits me: let me go.
HENRY. Answer me first.
BECKET. Make *me* archbishop! Why, my liege, I know
Some three or four poor priests a thousand times
Fitter for this grand function. *Me* archbishop!
God's favour and king's favour might so clash
That thou and I—— That were a jest indeed!
HENRY. Thou angerest me, man: I do not jest.

Enter ELEANOR.

ELEANOR. [*Singing.*]

Over! the sweet summer closes,
The reign of the roses is done——

HENRY. [*To* BECKET, *who is going.*] Thou shalt not go. I have not ended with thee.

ELEANOR. [*Seeing chart on table, aside.*] This chart with the red line! her bower! whose bower?

HENRY. The chart is not mine, but Becket's: take it, Thomas.

ELEANOR. Becket! O—ay—and these chessmen on the floor—the king's crown broken! Becket hath beaten thee again—and thou hast kicked down the board. I know thee of old.

HENRY. True enough, my mind was set upon other matters.

ELEANOR. What matters? State matters? love matters?

HENRY. My love for thee, and thine for me.

ELEANOR. Louis of France loved me, and I dreamed that I loved Louis of France: and I loved Henry of England, and Henry of England dreamed that he loved me; but the marriage-garland withers even with the putting on, the harvest moon is the ripening of the harvest, and the honeymoon is the gall of love; he dies of his honeymoon.

HENRY. Dead is he, my Queen? What, altogether? Let me swear nay to that by this cross on thy neck.
God's eyes! what a lovely cross! what jewels!

ELEANOR. Doth it please you? Take it and wear it on that hard heart of yours—there. [*Gives it to him.*

HENRY. [*Puts it on.*] On this left breast before so hard a heart,
To hide the scar left by thy Parthian dart.

ELEANOR. Has my simple song set you jingling? Nay, if I took and translated that hard heart into our Provençal facilities, I could so play about it with the rhyme——

HENRY. That the heart were lost in the rhyme and the matter in the metre. May we not pray you, Madam, to spare us the hardness of your facility?

ELEANOR. The wells of Castaly are not wasted upon the desert. We did but jest.

HENRY. There's no jest on the brows of Herbert there. What is it, Herbert?

Enter HERBERT OF BOSHAM.

HERBERT. My liege, the good Archbishop is no more.

HENRY. Peace to his soul!

HERBERT. I left him with peace on his face—that sweet other-world smile, which will be reflected in the spiritual body among the angels. But he longed much to see your Grace and the Chancellor ere he past, and his last words were a commendation of Thomas Becket to your Grace as his successor in the archbishoprick.

HENRY. Ha, Becket! thou rememberest our talk!

BECKET. My heart is full of tears—I have no answer.

HENRY. Well, well, old men must die, or the world would grow mouldy. A-hawking, a-hawking! If I sit, I grow fat. [*Leaps over table, and exit.*

ACT I.

SCENE I.—BECKET'S *House in London. Chamber barely furnished.* BECKET *unrobing.* HERBERT OF BOSHAM *and* SERVANT.

SERVANT. Shall I not help your lordship to your rest ?

BECKET. Friend, am I so much better than thyself
That thou shouldst help me ? Thou art wearied out
With this day's work, get thee to thine own bed.
Leave me with Herbert, friend. [*Exit* SERVANT.
Help me off, Herbert, with this—and this.

HERBERT. Was not the people's blessing as we past
Heart-comfort and a balsam to thy blood ?

BECKET. The people know their Church a tower of strength,
A bulwark against Throne and Baronage.
Too heavy for me, this ; off with it, Herbert !

HERBERT. Is it so much heavier than thy Chancellor's robe ?

BECKET. No ; but the Chancellor's and the Archbishop's
Together more than mortal man can bear.

HERBERT. Not heavier than thine armour at Toulouse ?

BECKET. But hast thou heard this cry of Gilbert Foliot
That I am not the man to be your Primate,
For Henry could not work a miracle—
Make an Archbishop of a soldier?

HERBERT. Ay,
For Gilbert Foliot held himself the man.
BECKET. Am I the man? That rang
Within my head last night, and when I slept
Methought I stood in Canterbury Minster,
And spake to the Lord God, and said,
"Henry the King hath been my friend, my brother,
And mine uplifter in this world, and chosen me
For this thy great archbishoprick, believing
That I should go against the Church with him,
And I shall go against him with the Church.
Am *I* the man?" And the Lord answer'd me,
"Thou art the man, and all the more the man."
And thereupon, methought, He drew toward me,
And smote me down upon the Minster floor.
I fell.
HERBERT. God make not thee, but thy foes, fall.
BECKET. And yet I seem appall'd—on such a sudden
At such an eagle-height I stand and see
The rift that runs between me and the King.
HERBERT. Thomas, thou art moved too much.
BECKET. O Herbert, here
I gash myself asunder from the King,
Tho' leaving each, a wound; mine own, a grief
To show the scar for ever—his, a hate
Not ever to be heal'd.

Enter ROSAMUND DE CLIFFORD. *Drops her veil.*

ROSAMUND. Save me, father, hide me.
BECKET. Rosamund de Clifford!
ROSAMUND. They follow me—and I must not be known.
BECKET. Pass in with Herbert there.
[*Exeunt* ROSAMUND *and* HERBERT *by side door.*

Enter FITZURSE.

FITZURSE. The Archbishop!

BECKET. Ay! what wouldst thou, Reginald?

FITZURSE. Why—why, my lord, I follow'd—follow'd one—

BECKET. And then what follows? Let me follow thee.

FITZURSE. It much imports me I should know her name.

BECKET. What her?

FITZURSE. The woman that I follow'd hither.

BECKET. Perhaps it may import her all as much
Not to be known.

FITZURSE. And what care I for that?
Come, come, my lord Archbishop; I saw that door
Close even now upon the woman.

BECKET. Well?

FITZURSE. [*Making for the door.*] Nay, let me pass, my lord, for I must know.

BECKET. Back, man!
Go home, and sleep thy wine off, for thine eyes
Glare stupid-wild with wine.

FITZURSE. [*Making to the door.*] I must and will.
I care not for thy new archbishoprick.

BECKET. Back, man, I tell thee! Lest
I smite thee with my crozier on the skull!

FITZURSE. I shall remember this.

BECKET. Do, and begone! [*Exit* FITZURSE.
These be those baron-brutes
That havock'd all the land in Stephen's day.
Rosamund de Clifford.

Re-enter ROSAMUND *and* HERBERT.

ROSAMUND. Here am I.

BECKET. Why here?

We gave thee to the charge of John of Salisbury,
To pass thee to thy secret bower to-morrow.
Wast thou not told to keep thyself from sight?

ROSAMUND. Poor bird of passage! so I was; but, father,
They say that you are wise in winged things,
And know the ways of Nature. Bar the bird
From following the fled summer—a chink—he's out,
Gone! And there stole into the city a breath
Full of the meadows, and it minded me
Of the sweet woods of Clifford, and the walks
Where I could move at pleasure, and I thought
Lo! I must out or die.

BECKET. Or out *and* die.

And what hast thou to do with this Fitzurse?

ROSAMUND. Nothing. He sued my hand. I shook at him.
He found me once alone. Nay—nay—I cannot
Tell you: my father drove him and his friends,
De Tracy and De Brito, from our castle.
I heard him swear revenge.

BECKET. Why will you court it
By self-exposure? flutter out at night?
Make it so hard to save a moth from the fire?

ROSAMUND. I have saved many of 'em. You catch 'em, so,
Softly, and fling them out to the free air.
They burn themselves *within*-door.

BECKET. Our good John

Must speed you to your bower at once. The child
Is there already.

ROSAMUND. Yes—the child—the child—
O rare, a whole long day of open field.

BECKET. Ay, but you go disguised.

ROSAMUND. O rare again!
We'll baffle them, I warrant. What shall it be?
I'll go as a nun.

BECKET. No.

ROSAMUND. What, not good enough
Even to play at nun?

BECKET. Dan John with a nun,
That Map, and these new railers at the Church,
May plaister his clean name with scurrilous rhymes!
No!
Go like a monk, cowling and clouding up
That fatal star, thy Beauty, from the squint
Of lust and glare of malice. Good-night! good-night!

ROSAMUND. Father, I am so tender to all hardness!
Nay, father, first thy blessing.

BECKET. Wedded?

ROSAMUND. Father!

BECKET. Well, well! I ask no more. Heaven bless thee! hence!

ROSAMUND. O holy father, when thou seest him next,
Commend me to thy friend.

BECKET. What friend?

ROSAMUND. The King.

BECKET. Herbert, take out a score of armed men
To guard this bird of passage to her cage;
And watch Fitzurse, and if he follow thee,
Make him thy prisoner. I am Chancellor yet.

[*Exeunt* HERBERT *and* ROSAMUND.

Poor soul! poor soul!
My friend, the King! . . . O thou Great Seal of England,
Given me by my dear friend the King of England—
We long have wrought together, thou and I—
Now must I send thee as a common friend
To tell the King, my friend, I am against him.

HERBERT. [*Re-entering.*] My lord, the town is quiet and the moon
Divides the whole long street with light and shade.
No footfall—no Fitzurse.

BECKET. The hog hath tumbled himself into some corner,
Some ditch, to snore away his drunkenness
Into the sober headache,—Nature's moral
Against excess. Let the Great Seal be sent
Back to the King to-morrow.

HERBERT. Must that be?
The King may rend the bearer limb from limb.

Enter JOHN OF SALISBURY.

JOHN. Thomas, thou wast not happy taking charge
Of this wild Rosamund to please the King,
Nor am I happy having charge of her—
The included Danaë has escaped again
Her tower, and her Acrisius—where to seek ?
I have been about the city.

BECKET. Thou wilt find her
Back in her lodging. Go with her—at once—
To-night—my men will guard you to the gates.
Be sweet to her, she has many enemies.
Send the Great Seal by daybreak. Both good-night!

[*Exit.*

SCENE 2.—*Street in Northampton leading to the Castle.* ELEANOR'S RETAINERS *and* BECKET'S RETAINERS *fighting.*

Enter ELEANOR *and* BECKET *from opposite streets.*

ELEANOR. Peace, fools!

BECKET. Peace, friends! what idle brawl is this?

RETAINERS OF BECKET. They said—her Grace's people —thou wast found—

Liars! I shame to quote 'em—caught, my lord,
With a wanton in thy lodging—Hell requite 'em!

RETAINERS OF ELEANOR. My liege, the Lord Fitzurse reported this
In passing to the Castle even now.

RETAINERS OF BECKET. And then they mock'd us and we fell upon 'em.

BECKET. [*To his* RETAINERS.] Go, go—no more of this!

ELEANOR. [*To her* RETAINERS.] Away!—
[*Exeunt* RETAINERS.
Fitzurse——

BECKET. Nay, let him be.

ELEANOR. No, no, my Lord Archbishop,
'Tis known you are midwinter to all women,
But often in your chancellorship you served
The follies of the King.

BECKET. No, not these follies!

ELEANOR. My lord, Fitzurse beheld her in your lodging.

BECKET. Whom?

ELEANOR. Well—you know—the minion, Rosamund.

BECKET. He had good eyes!

ELEANOR. Then hidden in the street
He watch'd her pass with John of Salisbury
And heard her cry "Where is this bower of mine?"
BECKET. Good ears too!
ELEANOR. You are going to the Castle,
Will you subscribe the customs?
BECKET. I leave that,
Knowing how much you reverence Holy Church,
My liege, to your conjecture.
ELEANOR. I and mine—
And many a baron holds along with me—
Are not so much at feud with Holy Church
But we might take your side against the customs—
So that you grant me one slight favour.
BECKET. What?
ELEANOR. A sight of that same chart which Henry gave you
With the red line—"her bower."
BECKET. And to what end?
ELEANOR. Look! I would move this wanton from his sight
And take the Church's danger on myself.
BECKET. For which she should be duly grateful.
ELEANOR. True!
Tho' she that binds the bond, herself should see
That kings are faithful to their marriage vow.
BECKET. Ay, Madam, and queens also.
ELEANOR. And queens also!
What is your drift?
BECKET. My drift is to the Castle,
Where I shall meet the Barons and my King. [*Exit.*

DE BROC, DE TRACY, DE BRITO, DE MORVILLE (*passing*).

ELEANOR. To the Castle ?
DE BROC. Ay !
ELEANOR. Stir up the King, the Lords ! Set all on fire against him !
DE BRITO. Ay, good Madam ! [*Exeunt.*
ELEANOR. Fool ! I will make thee hateful to thy King. Churl ! I will have thee frighted into France,
And I shall live to trample on thy grave. [*Exit.*

SCENE 3.—*The Same.*

DE BROC, DE TRACY, DE BRITO, DE MORVILLE (*passing*).

FITZURSE. I hate him for his insolence to all.
DE TRACY. And I for all his insolence to her.
DE BRITO. I hate him for I hate him is my reason, And yet I hate him for a hypocrite.

SCENE 4.—*The Hall in Northampton Castle.*

On one side of the stage doors of an inner Council-chamber, half-open. At the bottom, the great doors of the Hall. ROGER ARCHBISHOP OF YORK, FOLIOT BISHOP OF LONDON, HILARY OF CHICHESTER, BISHOP OF HEREFORD, RICHARD DE HASTINGS (*Grand Prior of Templars*), PHILIP DE ELEEMOSYNA (*the Pope's Almoner*), *and others.* DE BROC, FITZURSE, DE BRITO, DE MORVILLE, DE TRACY, *and*

other BARONS *assembled—a table before them.* JOHN OF OXFORD, *President of the Council.*

Enter BECKET *and* HERBERT OF BOSHAM.

BECKET. Where is the king ?

ROGER OF YORK. Gone hawking on the Nene,
His heart so gall'd with thine ingratitude,
He will not see thy face till thou hast sign'd
These ancient laws and customs of the realm.
Thy sending back the Great Seal madden'd him,
He all but pluck'd the bearer's eyes away.
Take heed, lest he destroy thee utterly.

BECKET. Then shalt thou step into my place and sign.

ROGER OF YORK. Didst thou not promise Henry to obey
These ancient laws and customs of the realm ?

BECKET. Saving the honour of my order—ay.
Customs, traditions,—clouds that come and go ;
The customs of the Church are Peter's rock.

ROGER OF YORK. Saving thine order ! Saving thine order, Thomas,
Is black and white at once, and comes to nought.

BECKET. Roger of York,
When I and thou were youths in Theobald's house,
Twice did thy malice and thy calumnies
Exile me from the face of Theobald.
Now I am Canterbury and thou art York.

ROGER OF YORK. And is not York the peer of Canterbury ?

JOHN OF OXFORD. Peace, peace, my lords ! these customs are no longer
As Canterbury calls them, wandering clouds,
But by the King's command are written down,

And by the King's command I, John of Oxford,
The President of this Council, read them.

BECKET. Read!

JOHN OF OXFORD. "If any cleric be accused of felony, the Church shall not protect him; but he shall answer to the summons of the King's court to be tried therein."

BECKET. And that I cannot sign.

JOHN OF OXFORD. "When a bishoprick falls vacant, the King, till another be appointed, shall receive the revenues thereof."

BECKET. And that I cannot sign.

JOHN OF OXFORD. "And when the vacancy is to be filled up, the King shall summon the chapter of that church to court, and the election shall be made in the Chapel Royal."

BECKET. And that I cannot sign: for that would make
Our island-Church a schism from Christendom,
And weigh down all free choice beneath the throne.

FOLIOT. And was thine own election so canonical,
Good father?

BECKET. If it were not, Gilbert Foliot,
I mean to cross the sea to France, and lay
My crozier in the Holy Father's hands,
And bid him re-create me, Gilbert Foliot.

FOLIOT. Nay; by another of these customs thou
Wilt not be suffer'd so to cross the seas
Without the license of our lord the King.

BECKET. That, too, I cannot sign.

DE BROC, DE BRITO, DE TRACY, FITZURSE,
DE MORVILLE, *start up—a clash of swords.*

Sign and obey!

BECKET. My lords, is this a combat or a council?
Are ye my masters, or my lord the King?

LORDS. [*Shouting.*] Sign, and obey the crown!

BECKET. The crown? Shall I do less for Canterbury
Than Henry for the crown?

DE BROC. The King is quick to anger; if thou anger him,
We wait but the King's word to strike thee dead.

BECKET. Strike, and I die the death of martyrdom;
Strike, and ye set these customs by my death
Ringing their own death-knell thro' all the realm.

HERBERT. And I can tell you, lords, ye are all as like
To lodge a fear in Thomas Becket's heart
As find a hare's form in a lion's cave.

JOHN OF OXFORD. Ay, sheathe your swords, ye will displease the King.

DE BROC. Why down then thou! but an he come to Saltwood,
By God's death thou shalt stick him like a calf!

[*Sheathing his sword.*

HILARY. O my good lord, I do entreat thee—sign.
Save the King's honour here before his barons.

PHILIP DE ELEEMOSYNA. My lord, thine ear! I have the ear of the Pope.
He pray'd me to pray thee to pacify
Thy King; for if thou go against thy King,
Then must he likewise go against thy King,
And then thy King might join the Antipope,
And that would shake the Papacy as it stands.

BECKET. If Rome be feeble, then should I be firm.

RICHARD DE HASTINGS. [*Kneeling.*] Becket, I am the oldest of the Templars;
I knew thy father; he would be mine age

Had he lived now; think of me as thy father!
Behold thy father kneeling to thee, Becket.

ANOTHER TEMPLAR. [*Kneeling.*] Father, I am the youngest of the Templars,
Look on me as I were thy bodily son,
For, like a son, I lift my hands to thee.

PHILIP. Wilt thou hold out for ever, Thomas Becket?
Dost thou not hear?

BECKET. [*Signs.*] Why—there then—there—I sign,
And swear to obey the customs.

[BECKET *draws apart with* HERBERT.

Herbert, Herbert, have I betray'd the Church?
I'll have the paper back—blot out my name.

HERBERT. Too late, my lord: you see they are signing there.

BECKET. False to myself—it is the will of God
To break me, prove me nothing of myself!
This Almoner hath tasted Henry's gold.
The cardinals have finger'd Henry's gold.
And Rome is venal ev'n to rottenness.
I see it, I see it.
I am no soldier, as he said—at least
No leader.

FOLIOT. [*From the table.*] My lord Archbishop, thou hast yet to seal.

BECKET. First, Foliot, let me see what I have sign'd.

[*Goes to the table.*

What, this! and this—what! new and old together!
Seal? If a seraph shouted from the sun,
And bad me seal against the rights of the Church,
I would anathematise him. I will not seal.

[*Exit with* HERBERT.

Enter KING HENRY.

HENRY. Where's Thomas? hath he sign'd? show me the papers!

Sign'd and not seal'd! How's that?

JOHN OF OXFORD. He would not seal.

And when he sign'd he sat down there and groan'd—

"False to myself! It is the will of God!"

HENRY. God's will be what it will, the man shall seal,

Or I will seal his doom. My burgher's son—

Nay, if I cannot break him as the prelate,

I'll crush him as the subject. Send for him back.

[*Sits on his throne.*

Barons and bishops of our realm of England,

After the nineteen winters of King Stephen—

A reign which was no reign—I came, your King!

And the event—our fallows till'd,

Much corn, repeopled towns, a realm again.

And, looking thro' my reign,

I found a hundred ghastly murders done

By men, the scum and offal of the Church;

Then, glancing thro' the story of this realm,

I came on certain wholesome usages,

Lost in desuetude, of my grandsire's day,

Good royal customs—had them written fair

For John of Oxford here to read to you.

JOHN OF OXFORD. And I can easily swear to these as being

The King's will and God's will and justice; yet

I could but read a part to-day, because——

FITZURSE. Because my lord of Canterbury——

DE TRACY. Ay,

This lord of Canterbury——

DE BRITO. As is his wont
Too much of late whene'er your royal rights
Are mooted in our councils——
FITZURSE. —made an uproar.
HENRY. And Becket had my bosom on all this;
If ever man by bonds of gratefulness—
I raised him from the puddle of the gutter,
Hoped, were he chosen Archbishop, Church and Crown,
Two sisters gliding in an equal dance,
Two rivers gently flowing side by side—
But no!
The bird that moults sings the same song again,
The snake that sloughs comes out a snake again.
God's eyes! I had meant to make him all but king.
Chancellor-Archbishop, he might well have sway'd
All England under Henry, the young King,
When I was hence. What did the traitor say?
False to himself, but ten-fold false to me!
The will of God—why, then it is my will—
Is he coming?
HILARY. [*Entering.*] With a crowd of worshippers,
And holds his cross before him thro' the crowd
As one that puts himself in sanctuary.
HENRY. His cross!
ROGER OF YORK. His cross! I'll front him, cross to cross. [*Exit* ROGER OF YORK.
HENRY. His cross! it is the traitor that imputes
Treachery to his King!
It is not safe for me to look upon him.
Away—with me!

[*Goes in with his* BARONS *to the Council-chamber, the door of which is left open.*

Enter BECKET, *holding his cross of silver before him. The* BISHOPS *come round him.*

HEREFORD. The King will not abide thee with thy cross.
Permit me, my good lord, to bear it for thee,
Being thy chaplain.

BECKET. No: it must protect me.

FOLIOT. I am the Dean of the province: let me bear it.
Make not thy King a traitorous murderer.

BECKET. Did not your barons draw their swords against me?

Enter ROGER OF YORK, *with his cross, advancing to* BECKET.

BECKET. Wherefore dost thou presume to bear thy cross,
Against the solemn ordinance from Rome,
Out of thy province?

ROGER OF YORK. Why dost thou presume,
Arm'd with thy cross, to come before the King?

FOLIOT. As Chancellor thou wast against the Church,
Now as Archbishop goest against the King;
For, like a fool, thou know'st no middle way.
Ay, ay! but art thou stronger than the King?

BECKET. Strong—not in mine own self, but Heaven; true
To either function, holding it: and thou
Fast, scourge thyself, and mortify thy flesh.
Not spirit—thou remainest Gilbert Foliot.
Get ye hence,
Tell what I say to the King.

[*Exeunt* HEREFORD, FOLIOT, *and other* BISHOPS.

ROGER OF YORK. The Church will hate thee.

[*Exit.*

BECKET. Serve my best friend and make him my worst foe ;

Fight for the Church, and set the Church against me !

HERBERT. To be honest is to set all knaves against thee.

Ah ! Thomas, excommunicate them all !

FITZURSE. [*Re-entering.*] My lord, the King demands three hundred marks,

Due from his castles of Berkhamstead and Eye

When thou thereof wast warden.

BECKET. Tell the King

I spent thrice that in fortifying his castles.

DE TRACY. [*Re-entering.*] My lord, the King demands seven hundred marks,

Lent at the siege of Toulouse by the King.

BECKET. I led seven hundred knights and fought his wars.

DE BRITO. [*Re-entering.*] My lord, the King demands five hundred marks,

Advanced thee at his instance by the Jews,

For which the King was bound security.

BECKET. I thought it was a gift ; I thought it was a gift.

Enter LORD LEICESTER (*followed by* ROGER OF YORK, HILARY, BARONS *and* BISHOPS).

LEICESTER. My lord, I come unwillingly. The King

Demands a strict account of all those revenues

From all the vacant sees and abbacies,

Which came into thy hands when Chancellor.

BECKET. How much might that amount to, my lord Leicester ?

LEICESTER. Some thirty—forty thousand silver marks.

BECKET. Are these your customs ? Grant me but one day,
To ponder these demands.

LEICESTER. Hear first thy sentence !
The King and all his lords——

BECKET. Son, first hear *me* !

LEICESTER. Nay, but hear thy judgment.
The King and all his barons——

BECKET. Judgment ! Barons !
Who but the bridegroom dares to judge the bride,
Or he the bridegroom may appoint ? Not he
That is not of the house, but from the street,
Stain'd with the mire thereof.
I will not stand
By the King's censure, make my cry to the Pope,
By whom I will be judged ; refer myself,
The King, these customs, all the Church, to him,
And under his authority—I depart. [*Going.*

DE BRITO, FITZURSE, DE TRACY, *and others* (*flinging wisps of rushes*).

DE BRITO, ETC. Ay, go in peace, caitiff, caitiff ! And that too, perjured prelate—and that, turncoat shaveling ! There, there, there ! traitor, traitor, traitor !

BECKET. Mannerless wolves !
[*Turning and facing them.*
When what ye shake at doth but seem to fly,
True test of coward, ye follow with a yell.

Enter HERALD.

HERALD. The King commands you, upon pain of death,
That none should wrong or injure your Archbishop.

[*Great doors of the Hall at the back open, and discover a crowd. They shout:*

Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord!

BECKET. The voice of the Lord is in the voice of the People!
The voice of the Lord will hush the hounds of Hell,
That ever yelp and snarl at Holy Church,
In everlasting silence.

ACT II.

SCENE I.—ROSAMUND'S *Bower. A Garden of Flowers. In the midst a bank of wild-flowers with a bench before it.*

Enter HENRY *and* ROSAMUND.

ROSAMUND. My own true liege and lord! O Henry—husband—
Be friends with him again—I do beseech thee.
HENRY. With Becket? I have but one hour with thee—
Sceptre and crozier clashing, and the mitre
Grappling the crown—and when I flee from this
For a gasp of freer air, a breathing-while
To rest upon thy bosom and forget him—
Why thou, my bird, thou pipest Becket. Becket—
ROSAMUND. Let there not be one frown in this one hour.
Out of the many thine, let this be mine!
HENRY. Well, well, no more of *him*—I'll send his folk,
His kin, all his belongings, overseas;
Age, orphans, and babe-breasting mothers—all
By hundreds to him—there to beg, starve, die—
The man shall feel that I can strike him yet.
ROSAMUND. Babes, orphans, mothers! is that royal, Sire?

HENRY. Traitress!
ROSAMUND. A faithful traitress to thy royal fame.
HENRY. Fame! what care I for fame?
Fame of to-day is infamy to-morrow;
Infamy of to-day is fame to-morrow;
And round and round again. What matters? Royal—
I mean to leave the royalty of my crown
Unlessen'd to mine heirs.
ROSAMUND. Still—thy fame too:
I say that should be royal.
HENRY. And I say,
I care not for thy saying.
ROSAMUND. And I say,
I care not for *thy* saying.
HENRY. Care dwell with me for ever, when I cease
To care for thee as ever!
ROSAMUND. No need! no need! . . .
There is a bench. Come, wilt thou sit? . . . My bank
Of wild-flowers [*he sits*]. At thy feet!
[*She sits at his feet.*
HENRY. I bad them clear
A royal pleasaunce for thee, in the wood,
Not leave these countryfolk at court.
ROSAMUND. I brought them
In from the wood, and set them here. I love them
More than the garden flowers, that seem at most
Sweet guests, or foreign cousins, not half speaking
The language of the land. I love *them* too,
Yes. But, my liege, I am sure, of all the roses—
Shame fall on those who gave it a dog's name—
This wild one [*picking a briar-rose*]—nay, I shall not prick
myself—
Is sweetest. Do but smell!

HENRY. Thou rose of the world!
Thou rose of all the roses!—thine! thine!
ROSAMUND. I know it.
HENRY. [*Muttering.*] Not hers. We have but one bond, her hate of Becket.
ROSAMUND. [*Half hearing.*] Nay! nay! what art thou muttering? *I* hate Becket?
My fault to name him! O let the hand of one
To whom thy voice is all her music, stay it
But for a breath. [*Puts her hand before his lips.*
Speak only of thy love.
There! wherefore dost thou so peruse it? Nay,
There may be crosses in my line of life.
HENRY. No mate for *her*, if it should come to that.
Life on the hand is naked gipsy-stuff;
Life on the face, the brows—clear innocence!
Vein'd marble—not a furrow yet—and hers
[*Muttering.*
Crost and recrost, a venomous spider's web——
ROSAMUND. [*Springing up.*] Out of the cloud, my Sun—out of the eclipse
Narrowing my golden hour!
HENRY. O Rosamund,
I would be true—would tell thee all—and something
I had to say—I love thee none the less—
Which will so vex thee.
ROSAMUND. Something against *me*?
HENRY. No, no, against myself.
ROSAMUND. I will not hear it.
Come, come, mine hour! I bargain for mine hour.
I'll call thee little Geoffrey.
HENRY. Call him!
ROSAMUND. Geoffrey!

HENRY. [*Looking off.*] How the boy grows!
ROSAMUND. Ay, and his brows are thine;
The mouth is only Clifford, my dear father.

GEOFFREY *runs on.*

GEOFFREY. My liege, what hast thou brought me?
HENRY. Venal imp!
What sayst thou to the Chancellorship of England?
GEOFFREY. O yes, my liege.
HENRY. "O yes, my liege!" He speaks
As if it were a cake of gingerbread.

Dost thou know, my boy, what it is to be Chancellor of England?

GEOFFREY. Something good, or thou wouldst not give it me.

HENRY. It is, my boy, to side with the King when Chancellor, and then to be made Archbishop and go against the King who made him, and turn the world upside down.

GEOFFREY. I won't have it then. Nay, but give it me, and I promise thee not to turn the world upside down.

HENRY. [*Giving him a ball.*] Here is a ball, my boy, thy world, to turn any way and play with as thou wilt—which is more than I can do with mine. Go try it, play. [*Exit* GEOFFREY.

A pretty lusty boy.
ROSAMUND. So like to thee;
Like to be liker.
HENRY. Not in my chin, I hope!
That threatens double.
ROSAMUND. Thou art manlike perfect.

HENRY. Ay, ay, no doubt; and were I humpt behind, Thou'dst say as much—the goodly way of women

Who love, for which I love them. May God grant
No ill befall or him or thee when I
Am gone.

ROSAMUND. Is *he* thy enemy?

HENRY. He? who? ay!

ROSAMUND. Thine enemy knows the secret of my bower.

HENRY. And I could tear him asunder with wild horses,
Before he would betray it. Nay—no fear!
More like is he to excommunicate me.

ROSAMUND. And I would creep, crawl over knife-edge flint
Barefoot, a hundred leagues, to stay his hand
Before he flash'd the bolt.

HENRY. And when he flash'd it
Shrink from me, like a daughter of the Church.

ROSAMUND. Ay, but he will not.

HENRY. Ay, but if he did?

ROSAMUND. O then! O then! I almost fear to say
That my poor heretic heart would excommunicate
His excommunication, clinging to thee
Closer than ever.

HENRY. [*Raising* ROSAMUND *and kissing her.*] My brave-hearted Rose!
Hath he ever been to see thee?

ROSAMUND. Here? not he.
And it is so lonely here—no confessor.

HENRY. Thou shalt confess all thy sweet sins to me.

ROSAMUND. Besides, we came away in such a heat,
I brought not ev'n my crucifix.

HENRY. Take this.

[*Giving her the Crucifix which* ELEANOR *gave him.*

ROSAMUND. O beautiful! May I have it as mine, till mine
Be mine again?

HENRY. [*Throwing it round her neck.*] Thine—as I am—till death!

ROSAMUND. Death? no! I'll have it with me in my shroud,
And wake with it, and show it to all the Saints.

HENRY. Nay—I must go; for I must hence to brave
The Pope, King Louis, and this turbulent priest.

ROSAMUND. [*Kneeling.*] O by thy love for me, all mine for thee,
Fling not thy soul into the flames of hell:
I kneel to thee—be friends with him again.

HENRY. [*Breaking off suddenly.*] Let it content you now
There is no woman that I love so well.

ROSAMUND. No woman but should be content with that—

HENRY. And one fair child to fondle!

ROSAMUND. O yes, the child
We waited for so long—heaven's gift at last—
And how you doated on him then! To-day
I almost fear'd your kiss was colder—yes—
But then the child *is* such a child. What chance
That he should ever spread into the man
Here in our silence? I have done my best,
I am not learn'd.

HENRY. I am the King, his father,
And I will look to it.

ROSAMUND. Must you go, my liege,
So suddenly?

HENRY. I came to England suddenly,

I needs must leave as suddenly. It is raining,
Put on your hood and see me to the bounds.
Look, look! if little Geoffrey have not tost
His ball into the brook! makes after it too
To find it. Why, the child will drown himself.

ROSAMUND. Geoffrey! Geoffrey! [*Exeunt.*

MARGERY. [*Singing behind scene.*]

Babble in bower
Under the rose!
Bee mustn't buzz,
Whoop—but he knows.

Kiss me, little one,
Nobody near!
Grasshopper, grasshopper,
Whoop—you can hear.

Kiss in the bower,
Tit on the tree!
Bird mustn't tell,
Whoop—he can see.

Enter MARGERY (*chattering*).

I ha' been but a week here and I ha' seen what I ha' seen, for to be sure it's no more than a week since our old Father Philip that has confessed our mother for twenty years, and she was hard put to it, and to speak truth, nigh at the end of our last crust, and that mouldy, and she cried out on him to put me forth in the world and to make me a woman of the world, and to win my own bread, whereupon he asked our mother if I could keep a quiet tongue i' my head, and not speak till I was spoke to, and I answered for myself that I never spoke more than was needed, and

he told me he would advance me to the service of a great lady, and took me ever so far away, and the more shame to him after his promise, into a garden and not into the world, and bad me whatever I saw not to speak one word, and I ha' seen what I ha' seen, and what's the good of my talking to myself, for here comes my lady [*enter* ROSAMUND], and, my lady, tho' I shouldn't speak one word, I wish you joy o' the King's brother.

ROSAMUND. What is it you mean ?

MARGERY. I mean your goodman, your husband, my lady, for I saw your ladyship a-parting wi' him even now i' the coppice, when I was a-getting o' bluebells for your ladyship's nose to smell on—and I ha' seen the King once at Oxford, and he's as like the King as fingernail to fingernail, and I thought at first it was the King, only you know the King's married, for King Louis——

ROSAMUND. Married !

MARGERY. Years and years, my lady, for her husband, King Louis——

ROSAMUND. Hush !

MARGERY. ——And I thought if it were the King's brother he had a better bride than the King, for the people do say that his is bad beyond all reckoning, and——

ROSAMUND. The people lie.

MARGERY. Very like, my lady, but most on 'em know an honest woman and a lady when they see her, and besides they say, she makes songs, and that's against her, for I never knew an honest woman that could make songs, tho' to be sure our mother 'ill sing me old songs by the hour, but then, God help her, she had 'em from her mother, and her mother from her mother back and back for ever so long, but none on 'em ever made songs, and they were all honest.

ROSAMUND. Go, you shall tell me of her some other time.

MARGERY. There's none so much to tell on her, my lady, only she kept the seventh commandment better than some I know on, or I couldn't look your ladyship i' the face, and she brew'd the best ale in all Glo'ster, that is to say in her time when she had the "Crown."

ROSAMUND. The crown! who?

MARGERY. Mother.

ROSAMUND. I mean her whom you call—fancy—my husband's brother's wife.

MARGERY. Oh, Queen Eleanor. Yes, my lady; and tho' I be sworn not to speak a word, I can tell you all about her, if——

ROSAMUND. No word now. I am faint and sleepy. Leave me. Nay—go. I am in the dark. [*Exit* MARGERY.
He charged me not to question any of those
About me. Have I? she questioned *me*.
I have lived, poor bird, from cage to cage, and known
Nothing but him—happy to know no more,
So that he loved me—and he loves me—yes,
And bound me by his love to secrecy
Till his own time.
Eleanor, Eleanor, have I
Not heard ill things of her in France? Oh, she's
The Queen of France. I see it—some confusion,
Some strange mistake. I did not hear aright,
Myself confused with parting from the King.
Yet her—what her? he hinted of some her—
When he was here before—
Something that would displease me. Hath he stray'd
From love's clear path into the common bush,
And, being scratch'd, returns to his true rose,

Who hath not thorn enough to prick him for it,
Ev'n with a word ?
I would not hear him. Nay—there's more—there's more
" No mate for her, if it should come to that "—
To that—to what ?
O God ! some dreadful truth is breaking on me—
Some dreadful thing is coming on me.

[*Enter* GEOFFREY.

Geoffrey !

GEOFFREY. What are you crying for, when the sun shines ?

ROSAMUND. Hath not thy father left us to ourselves ?

GEOFFREY. Ay, but he's taken the rain with him. I hear Margery : I'll go play with her. [*Exit* GEOFFREY.

ROSAMUND. Rainbow, stay,
Gleam upon gloom,
Bright as my dream,
Rainbow, stay !
But it passes away,
Gloom upon gleam,
Dark as my doom—
O rainbow stay.

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*Montmirail.* "*The Meeting of the Kings.*"

LOUIS OF FRANCE. *Crowd in the distance.*

LOUIS. Becket, my friend of friends! I must save him from my brother Henry—and I have asked him to meet the Archbishop here. Surely thro' Henry's savagery he and his friends would have starved in banishment but for my giving them food and home. Henry's mood of wrath continues yet, and he has made York, in defiance of Canterbury, crown young Henry. Therefore our holy Becket keeps the threat of the Pope over England. Now is the time to patch up a peace. If we steer well, young Henry, whom Becket loves, will serve our Becket's and the Church's cause, and all will yet be well.

Enter HENRY.

HENRY. Brother of France, what shall be done with Becket?

LOUIS. The holy Thomas! Brother, you have traffick'd
Between the Emperor and the Pope, between
The Pope and Antipope—a perilous game
For men to play with God.

HENRY. Ay, ay, good brother,
They call you the Monk-King.

LOUIS. Who calls me? she

That was my wife, now yours? You have her Duchy,
The point you aim'd at, and pray God she prove
True wife to you.

HENRY. Tut, tut! did we convene
This conference but to babble of our wives?
They are plagues enough in-door.

LOUIS. Well, well, no more! I am proud of my "Monk-King,"
Whoever named me; and, brother, Holy Church
May rock, but will not wreck, nor our Archbishop
Stagger on the slope decks for any rough sea
Blown by the breath of kings. Restore his kin.
Reseat him on his throne of Canterbury,
Be, both, the friends you were.

HENRY. The friends we were!
The world had never seen the like before.
You are too cold to know the fashion of it.
Well, well, we will be gentle with him, gracious—
Most gracious.

[*Voices from the Crowd*, "Blessed be the Lord Archbishop."

Enter BECKET, *after him* JOHN OF OXFORD, ROGER OF YORK, GILBERT FOLIOT, DE BROC, FITZURSE, *etc.*

Only that the rift he made
May close between us, here I am wholly king,
The word should come from him.

BECKET. [*Kneeling.*] Then, my dear liege,
I here deliver all this controversy
Into your royal hands.

HENRY. Ah, Thomas, Thomas,
Thou art thyself again, Thomas again.

BECKET. [*Rising.*] Saving God's honour!

HENRY. Out upon thee, man!
Saving the Devil's honour, his yes and no.
Brother of France, you have taken, cherish'd him
Who thief-like fled from his own church by night,
No man pursuing. I would have had him back.
Take heed he do not turn and rend you too.
Yet, yet—that none may dream
I go against God's honour—ay, or himself
In any reason, choose
A hundred of the wisest heads from England,
A hundred, too, from Normandy and Anjou:
Let these decide on what was customary
In olden days, and all the Church of France
Decide on their decision, I am content.

LOUIS. Ay, ay! the King humbles himself enough.

BECKET. [*Aside.*] Words, words! [*Aloud.*] My lieges and my lords,
The thanks of Holy Church are due to those
That went before us for their work, which we
Inheriting reap an easier harvest. Yet——

LOUIS. My lord, will you be greater than the Saints,
More than St. Peter? whom——what is it you doubt?

BECKET. O good son Louis, do not counsel me,
No, to suppress God's honour for the sake
Of any king that breathes. No, God forbid!

HENRY. No! God forbid! and turn me Mussulman!
No God but one, and Mahound is his prophet.
But for your Christian, look you, you shall have
None other God but me—me, Thomas, son
Of Gilbert Becket, London merchant. Out!
I hear no more. [*Exit.*

LOUIS. Our brother's anger puts him,
Poor man, beside himself—not wise. My lord,

We have clasp't your cause, believing that our brother
Had wrong'd you; but this day he proffer'd peace.
You will have war; and tho' we grant the Church
King over this world's kings, yet, my good lord,
We that are kings are something in this world,
And so we pray you, draw yourself from under
The wings of France. We shelter you no more. [*Exit.*

JOHN OF OXFORD. I am glad that France hath scouted him at last:
I told the Pope what manner of man he was. [*Exit.*

ROGER OF YORK. Yea, since he flouts the will of either realm,
Let either cast him away like a dead dog! [*Exit.*

FOLIOT. Yea, let a stranger spoil his heritage,
And let another take his bishoprick! [*Exit.*

DE BROC. Our castle, my lord, belongs to Canterbury.
I pray you come and take it. [*Exit.*

FITZURSE. When you will. [*Exit.*

BECKET. Cursed be John of Oxford, Roger of York,
And Gilbert Foliot! cursed those De Brocs!
Cursed Fitzurse, and all the rest of them
That feed this hate between my liege and me,
And trample on the rights of Englishmen!
See here!

HERBERT. What's here?

BECKET. A notice from the priest,
To whom our John of Salisbury committed
The secret of the bower, that our wolf-Queen
Is prowling round the fold. I should be back
In England ev'n for this.

HERBERT. These are by-things
In the great cause.

BECKET. The by-things of the Lord

Are the wrong'd innocences that will cry
From all the hidden by-ways of the world
In the great day against the wronger.

HERBERT. The King!

Re-enter KING HENRY.

HENRY. We have had so many hours together, Thomas,
So many happy hours alone together,
That I would speak with you once more alone.

BECKET. Send back again those exiles of my kin
Who wander famine-wasted thro' the world.

HENRY. Have I not promised, man, to send them back?

BECKET. Yet one thing more. Thou hast broken thro' the pales
Of privilege, crowning thy young son by York,
London, and Salisbury—not Canterbury.

HENRY. York crown'd the Conqueror—not Canterbury.

BECKET. There was no Canterbury in William's time.

HENRY. But Hereford, you know, crown'd the first Henry.

BECKET. And Anselm crown'd this Henry o'er again.

HENRY. And thou shalt crown my Henry o'er again.

BECKET. And is it then with thy good-will that I
Proceed against thine evil councillors,
And hurl the dread ban of the Church on those
Who made the second mitre play the first,
And acted me?

HENRY. Well, well, then—have thy way!
It may be they were evil councillors.
What more, my lord Archbishop? What more, Thomas?
I make thee full amends. Say all thy say,
But blaze not out before the Frenchmen here.

BECKET. More? Nothing, so thy promise be thy deed.

HENRY. Give me thy hand. My Lords of France and England,
My friend of Canterbury and myself
Are now once more at perfect amity.
Unkingly should I be, and most unknightly,
Not striving still, however much in vain,
To rival him in Christian charity.
And so farewell, until we meet in England.

BECKET. Farewell, my liege!

[*Exit* HENRY, *then the* BARONS *and* BISHOPS.

HERBERT. Did the King speak of the customs?

BECKET. No!
The State will die, the Church can never die.
The King's not like to die for that which dies;
But I must die for that which never dies.
It will be so—my visions in the Lord.
And when my voice
Is martyred mute, and this man disappears,
That perfect trust may come again between us.
The crowd are scattering, let us move away!
And thence to England.

SCENE 2.—*Outside the Woods near* ROSAMUND'S *Bower.*

ELEANOR. FITZURSE.

ELEANOR. Up from the salt lips of the land we two
Have track'd the King to this dark inland wood;
And somewhere hereabouts he vanish'd. Here
His turtle builds: his exit is our adit:
Watch! he will out again, and presently.

[*A great horn winded.*

FITZURSE. Hark! Madam!

ELEANOR. Ay,
How ghostly sounds that horn in the black wood!

[*A Countryman flying.*

Whither away, man? what are you flying from?

COUNTRYMAN. The witch! the witch! she sits naked by a great heap of gold in the middle of the wood, and when the horn sounds she comes out as a wolf. Get you hence! a man passed in there to-day: I holla'd to him, but he didn't hear me: he'll never out again, the witch has got him. I daren't stay—I daren't stay!

ELEANOR. Kind of the witch to give thee warning, tho'.

[*Man flies.*

Is not this wood-witch of the rustic's fear
Our woodland Circe that hath witch'd the King?

[*Horn sounded. Another flying.*

FITZURSE. Again! stay, fool, and tell me why thou fliest.

COUNTRYMAN. Fly thou too. The King keeps his forest head of game here, and when that horn sounds, a score of wolf-dogs are let loose that will tear thee piecemeal. Linger not till the third horn. Fly! [*Exit.*

ELEANOR. This is the likelier tale. We have hit the place. Now let the King's fine game look to itself.

[*Horn.*

FITZURSE. Again!—
And far on in the dark heart of the wood
I hear the yelping of the hounds of hell.

ELEANOR. I have my dagger here to still their throats.

FITZURSE. Nay, Madam, not to-night—the night is falling.
What can be done to-night?

ELEANOR. Well—well—away.

[*Exit* FITZURSE.

GEOFFREY. [*Coming out of the wood.*] Light again! light again! Margery? no, that's a finer thing there. How it glitters!

ELEANOR. Come to me, little one. How camest thou hither?

GEOFFREY. On my legs.

ELEANOR. And mighty pretty legs too. Thou art the prettiest child I ever saw. Wilt thou love me?

GEOFFREY. No; I only love mother.

ELEANOR. Ay; and who is thy mother?

GEOFFREY. They call her—— But she lives secret, you see.

ELEANOR. Why?

GEOFFREY. Don't know why.

ELEANOR. Ay, but some one comes to see her now and then. Who is he?

GEOFFREY. Can't tell.

ELEANOR. What does she call him?

GEOFFREY. My liege.

ELEANOR. Pretty one, how camest thou?

GEOFFREY. There was a bit of yellow silk here and there, and it looked pretty like a glowworm, and I thought if I followed it I should find the fairies.

ELEANOR. I am the fairy, pretty one, a good fairy to thy mother. Take me to her.

GEOFFREY. There are good fairies and bad fairies, and sometimes she cries, and can't sleep sound o' nights because of the bad fairies.

ELEANOR. She shall cry no more; she shall sleep sound enough if thou wilt take me to her. I am her good fairy.

GEOFFREY. But you don't look like a good fairy. Mother does. You are not pretty, like mother.

ELEANOR. We can't all of us be as pretty as thou art—[*aside*] little bastard. Show me where thou camest out of the wood.

GEOFFREY. By this tree ; but I don't know if I can find the way back again. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE 3.—ROSAMUND'S *Bower.*

ROSAMUND. The boy so late ; pray God, he be not lost.
I sent this Margery, and she comes not back ;
I sent another, and she comes not back.
I go myself—so many alleys, crossings,
Paths, avenues—nay, if I lost him, now
The folds have fallen from the mystery,
And left all naked, I were lost indeed.

Enter GEOFFREY *and* ELEANOR.

Geoffrey, the pain thou hast put me to !
[*Seeing* ELEANOR.
Ha, you !
How came you hither ?

ELEANOR. Your own child brought me hither !

GEOFFREY. You said you couldn't trust Margery, and I watched her and followed her into the woods, and I lost her and went on and on till I found the light and the lady, and she says she can make you sleep o' nights.

ROSAMUND. How dared you ? Know you not this bower is secret,
Of and belonging to the King of England,
More sacred than his forests for the chase ?
Nay, nay, Heaven help you ; get you hence in haste
Lest worse befall you.

ELEANOR. Child, I am mine own self

Of and belonging to the King. The King
Hath divers ofs and ons, ofs and belongings,
Almost as many as your true Mussulman—
Belongings, paramours, whom it pleases him
To call his wives; but so it chances, child,
That I am his main paramour, his sultana.
But since the fondest pair of doves will jar,
Ev'n in a cage of gold, we had words of late,
And thereupon he call'd my children bastards.
Do you believe that you are married to him?

ROSAMUND. I *should* believe it.

ELEANOR. You must not believe it,
Because I have a wholesome medicine here
Puts that belief asleep. Your answer, beauty!
Do you believe that you are married to him?

ROSAMUND. Geoffrey, my boy, I saw the ball you lost in the fork of the great willow over the brook. Go. See that you do not fall in. Go.

GEOFFREY. And leave you alone with the good fairy. She calls you beauty, but I don't like her looks.

ROSAMUND. Go. [*Exit* GEOFFREY.

ELEANOR. He is easily found again. *Do* you believe it?
I pray you then to take my sleeping-draught;
But if you should not care to take it—see!
[*Draws a dagger.*
What! have I scared the red rose from your face
Into your heart. But this will find it there,
And dig it from the root for ever.

ROSAMUND. Help! help!

ELEANOR. They say that walls have ears; but these, it seems,
Have none! and I have none—to pity thee.

ROSAMUND. I do beseech you—my child is so young.

I am not so happy I could not die myself,
But the child is so young. You have children—his;
And mine is the King's child; so, if you love him—
Nay, if you love him, there is great wrong done
Somehow; but if you do not—there are those
Who say you do not love him—let me go
With my young boy, and God will be our guide,
And I will beg my bread along the world.
I never meant you harm in any way.
See, I can say no more.

ELEANOR. Will you not say you are not married to him?

ROSAMUND. Ay, Madam, I can *say* it, if you will.

ELEANOR. Then is thy pretty boy a bastard?

ROSAMUND. No.

ELEANOR. And thou thyself a proven wanton?

ROSAMUND. No.

I am none such. I never loved but one.
I have heard of such that range from love to love.
Like the wild beast—if you can call it love.
I have heard of such—yea, even among those
Who sit on thrones—I never saw any such,
Never knew any such, and howsoever
You do misname me, match'd with any such,
I am snow to mud.

ELEANOR. The more the pity then
That thy true home—the heavens—cry out for thee
Who art too pure for earth.

Enter FITZURSE.

FITZURSE. Give her to me.

ELEANOR. The Judas-lover of our passion-play
Hath track'd us hither.

FITZURSE. Well, why not? I follow'd
You and the child: he babbled all the way.
Give her to me to make my honeymoon.
ELEANOR. No!
I follow out my hate and thy revenge.
FITZURSE. You bad me take revenge another way—
To bring her to the dust. . . . Come with me, love,
And I will love thee. . . . Madam, let her live.
I have a far-off burrow where the King
Would miss her and for ever.
ROSAMUND. Give me the poison; set me free of him!
[ELEANOR *offers the vial.*
No, no! I will not have it.
ELEANOR. Then this other,
The wiser choice, because my sleeping-draught
May bloat thy beauty out of shape, and make
Thy body loathsome even to thy child;
While this but leaves thee with a broken heart,
A doll-face blanch'd and bloodless, over which
If pretty Geoffrey do not break his own,
It must be broken for him.
ROSAMUND. Oh, I see now
Your purpose is to fright me—a troubadour
You play with words. You had never used so many,
Not if you meant it, I am sure. The child . . .
No . . . mercy! No! [*Kneels.*
ELEANOR. Play! . . . that bosom never
Heaved under the King's hand with such true passion
As at this loveless knife that stirs the riot,
Which it will quench in blood! Slave, if he love thee,
Thy life is worth the wrestle for it: what's here?
By very God, the cross I gave the King!
His village darling in some lewd caress

Has wheedled it off the King's neck to her own.
By thy leave, beauty. Ay, the same! Fitzurse,
The running down the chase is kindlier sport
Ev'n than the death. Take thy one chance;
Catch at the last straw. Kneel to thy lord Fitzurse;
Crouch even because thou hatest him; fawn upon him
For thy life and thy son's.

ROSAMUND. [*Rising.*] I am a Clifford,
My son a Clifford and Plantagenet.
I am to die then, tho' there stand beside thee
One who might grapple with thy dagger, if he
Had aught of man, or thou of woman; or I
Would bow to such a baseness as would make me
Most worthy of it: both of us will die.
Strike!
I challenge thee to meet me before God.
Answer me there.

ELEANOR. [*Raising the dagger.*] This in thy bosom, fool,
And after in thy bastard's!

Enter BECKET *from behind. Catches hold of her arm.*

BECKET. Murderess!

[*The dagger falls; they stare at one another. After a pause.*

ELEANOR. My lord, we know you proud of your fine hand,
But having now admired it long enough,
We find that it is mightier than it seems—
At least mine own is frailer: you are laming it.

BECKET. And lamed and maim'd to dislocation, better
Than raised to take a life which Henry bad me

Guard from the stroke that dooms thee after death
To wail in deathless flame.

ELEANOR. My lord Fitzurse.

BECKET. He too! what dost thou here?
Go, lest I blast thee with anathema
And make thee a world's horror.

FITZURSE. My lord, I shall
Remember this.

BECKET. I *do* remember thee. [*Exit* FITZURSE.
[*To* ELEANOR] Take up your dagger; put it in the sheath.
[*To* ROSAMUND] Daughter, the world hath trick'd thee, leave it, daughter.
Come thou with me to Godstow nunnery.

ACT IV.

SCENE 1.—*Castle in Normandy. King's Chamber.*

HENRY, ROGER OF YORK, FOLIOT, JOCELYN OF SALISBURY.

ROGER OF YORK. Nay, nay, my liege,
He rides abroad with armed followers,
Cursed and anathematised us right and left,
Stirr'd up a party there against your son—

HENRY. Roger of York, you always hated him,
Even when you both were boys at Theobald's.

ROGER OF YORK. I always hated boundless arrogance.

HENRY. I cannot think he moves against my son,
Knowing right well with what a tenderness
He loved my son.

ROGER OF YORK. Before you made him king,
Crowning thy young son by York,
London, and Salisbury—not Canterbury.

HENRY. God's eyes, for that I made him full amends,
Told him that he should crown my Henry o'er again.
What would ye have me do?

ROGER OF YORK. Summon your barons; take their counsel: yet
I know—could swear—as long as Becket breathes,
Your Grace will never have one quiet hour.

HENRY. What? . . . Ay . . . but pray you do not work upon me.

I see your drift . . . it may be so . . . and yet
You know me easily anger'd. Will you hence?
He shall absolve you . . . you shall have redress.
I have a dizzying headache. Let me rest.
I'll call you by and by.

[*Exeunt* ROGER OF YORK, FOLIOT, *and* JOCELYN OF SALISBURY.

Would he were dead! I have lost all love for him.
If God would take him in some sudden way—
Would he were dead.

DE TRACY. [*Entering.*] My liege, the Queen of England.

HENRY. God's eyes!

Enter ELEANOR.

ELEANOR. Of England? Say of Aquitaine.
I am no Queen of England. I had dream'd
I was the bride of England, and a queen.

HENRY. And,—while you dream'd you were the bride of England,—
Stirring her baby-king against me? ha!

ELEANOR. I dream'd I was the consort of a king,
Not one whose back his priest has broken.
The brideless Becket is thy king and mine.

HENRY. Methought I had recover'd of the Becket.
What game, what juggle, what devilry are you playing?
Why do you thrust this Becket on me again?

ELEANOR. Why? for I *am* true wife, and have my fears
Lest Becket thrust you even from your throne.
Do you know this cross, my liege?

HENRY. [*Turning his head.*] Away! Not I.

ELEANOR. Not ev'n the central diamond, worth, I think,
Half of the Antioch whence I had it.

HENRY. That ?

ELEANOR. I gave it you, and you your paramour ;
She sends it back, as being dead to earth,
So dead henceforth to you.

HENRY. Dead ! you have murder'd her,
Found out her secret bower and murder'd her.

ELEANOR. Your Becket knew the secret of your bower.

HENRY. [*Calling out.*] Ho there! thy rest of life is hopeless prison.

ELEANOR. First, free thy captive from *her* hopeless prison.
Will you have this again ?

[*Offering the cross. He dashes it down.*

St. Cupid, that is too irreverent.
Then mine once more. [*Puts it on.*
Your cleric hath your lady.
Hath used the full authority of his Church
To put her into Godstow nunnery.

HENRY. To put her into Godstow nunnery!
He dared not—liar! yet, yet I remember—
I do remember.
He bad me put her into a nunnery—
Into Godstow, into Hellstow, Devilstow!

ELEANOR. Aha!

Enter the four KNIGHTS.

HENRY. Sluggards and fools!
The slave that eat my bread has kick'd his King!
The dog I cramm'd with dainties worried me!
The fellow that on a lame jade came to court,
A ragged cloak for saddle—he, he, he—

I'll have her out again, he shall absolve
The bishops—they but did my will—not you—
Sluggards and fools, why do you stand and stare ?
You are no King's men—you—you—you are Becket's men.
Down with King Henry! up with the Archbishop !
Will no man free me from this pestilent priest? [*Exit.*

[*The* KNIGHTS *draw their swords.*

ELEANOR. *Are* ye King's men? I am King's woman, I.

THE KNIGHTS. King's men! King's men!

SCENE 2.—*A Room in Canterbury Monastery.*

BECKET *and* JOHN OF SALISBURY.

JOHN OF SALISBURY. Thomas, I would thou had'st return'd to England
With more of olive-branch and amnesty
For foes at home. Thou hast raised the world against thee.

BECKET. Why, John, my kingdom is not of this world.

Enter ROSAMUND.

ROSAMUND. Can I speak with you
Alone, my father?

BECKET. Come you to confess ?

ROSAMUND. Not now.

BECKET. Then speak ; this is my other self.
Who like my conscience never lets me be.

ROSAMUND. I know him ; our good John of Salisbury.

BECKET. Breaking already from thy noviciate
To plunge into this bitter world again—
These wells of Marah. I am grieved, my daughter.
I thought that I had made a peace for thee.

ROSAMUND. Small peace was mine in my noviciate, father.
Thro' all closed doors a dreadful whisper crept
That thou would'st excommunicate the King.
My lord, you have not excommunicated him?
Oh, if you have, absolve him!
BECKET. Daughter, daughter,
Deal not with things you know not.
ROSAMUND. I know *him*.
JOHN OF SALISBURY. No, daughter, you mistake our good Archbishop;
He thought to excommunicate him—Thomas,
You could not—old affection master'd you,
You falter'd into tears.
ROSAMUND. God bless him for it.
BECKET. Nay, make me not a woman, John of Salisbury,
Nor make me traitor to my holy office.
Did not a man's voice ring along the aisle,
"The King is sick and almost unto death."
How could I excommunicate him then?
ROSAMUND. And wilt thou excommunicate him now?
BECKET. Daughter, my time is short, I shall not do it.
And were it longer—well—I should not do it.
ROSAMUND. Thanks in this life, and in the life to come.
BECKET. Get thee back to thy nunnery with all haste;
Let this be thy last trespass. But one question—
How fares thy pretty boy, the little Geoffrey?
Doth he remember me?
ROSAMUND. I warrant him.
BECKET. He is marvellously like thee.
ROSAMUND. Liker the King.
BECKET. No, daughter.

ROSAMUND. Ay, but wait.
He will be very king.

BECKET. Ev'n so: but think not of the King: farewell!

ROSAMUND. My lord, the city is full of armed men.

BECKET. Ev'n so: farewell!

ROSAMUND. I will but pass to vespers
And breathe one prayer for my liege-lord the King,
His child and mine own soul, and so return.

BECKET. Pray for me too: much need of prayer have I.

[ROSAMUND *kneels and goes.*

JOHN OF SALISBURY. What noise was that?

BECKET. I once was out with Henry in the days
When Henry loved me, and we came upon
A wild-fowl sitting on her nest, so still
I reach'd my hand and touch'd; she did not stir;
The snow had frozen round her, and she sat
Stone-dead upon a heap of ice-cold eggs.
Look! how this love, this mother, runs thro' all
The world God made—even the beast—the bird!

JOHN OF SALISBURY. Ay, still a lover of the beast and bird?
But these arm'd men—will you not hide yourself?

BECKET. There was a little fair-hair'd Norman maid
Lived in my mother's house: if Rosamund is
The world's rose, as her name imports her—she
Was the world's lily.

JOHN OF SALISBURY. Ay, and what of her?

BECKET. She died of leprosy.

JOHN OF SALISBURY. I know not why
You call these old things back again, my lord.

BECKET. The drowning man, they say, remembers all
The chances of his life, just ere he dies.

JOHN OF SALISBURY. Ay—but these arm'd men—will *you* drown *yourself*?
He loses half the meed of martyrdom
Who will be martyr when he might escape.

BECKET. What day of the week? Tuesday?

JOHN OF SALISBURY. Tuesday, my lord.

BECKET. On a Tuesday was I born, and on a Tuesday
Baptized: and on a Tuesday came to me
The ghostly warning of my martyrdom;
And on a Tuesday——

TRACY *enters, then* FITZURSE, DE BRITO, *and* DE MORVILLE. MONKS *following.*

—on a Tuesday——Tracy

A long silence, broken by FITZURSE, *saying, contemptuously,*

God help thee!
My lord, we bring a message from the King
Beyond the water: will you have it alone,
Or with these listeners near you?

BECKET. As you will.

FITZURSE. Nay, as *you* will.

BECKET. Nay, as *you* will.

JOHN OF SALISBURY. Why then
Better perhaps to speak with them apart.
Let us withdraw.

[*All go out except the four* KNIGHTS *and* BECKET.

FITZURSE. We are all alone with him.
Shall I not smite him with his own cross-staff?

DE MORVILLE. No, look! the door is open: let him be.

FITZURSE. The King condemns your excommunicating——

BECKET. This is no secret, but a public matter,
In here again!
[JOHN OF SALISBURY *and* MONKS *return*.
Now, sirs, the King's commands!
FITZURSE. The King commands you to absolve the bishops
Whom you have excommunicated.
BECKET. I?
Not I, the Pope. Ask *him* for absolution.
FITZURSE. But you advised the Pope.
BECKET. And so I did.
They have but to submit.
THE FOUR KNIGHTS. The King commands you.
We are all King's men.
BECKET. King's men at least should know
That their own King closed with me last July
That I should pass the censures of the Church
On those that crown'd young Henry in this realm,
And trampled on the rights of Canterbury.
FITZURSE. What! dare you charge the King with treachery?
BECKET. I spake no word of treachery, Reginald.
Nay, you yourself were there: you heard yourself.
FITZURSE. I was not there.
BECKET. I saw you there.
FITZURSE. I was not.
BECKET. You were. I never forget anything.
FITZURSE. He makes the King a traitor, me a liar.
How long shall we forbear him? [KNIGHTS *crowd round*.
BECKET. Ye think to scare me from my loyalty
To God and to the Holy Father. No!
Tho' all the swords in England flash'd above me
Ready to fall at Henry's word or yours—

Tho' all the loud-lung'd trumpets upon earth
Blared from the heights of all the thrones of her kings,
Blowing the world against me, I would stand
Clothed with the full authority of Rome,
Mail'd in the perfect panoply of faith,
First of the foremost of their files, who die
For God, to people heaven in the great day
When God makes up His jewels.

DE MORVILLE. Know you not
You have spoken to the peril of your life?

BECKET. As I shall speak again.

FITZURSE, DE TRACY, and DE BRITO. To arms!
[*They rush out*, DE MORVILLE *lingers*.

BECKET. De Morville,
I had thought so well of you; and even now
You seem the least assassin of the four.
Oh, do not damn yourself for company!
Is it too late for me to save your soul?
I pray you for one moment stay and speak.

DE MORVILLE. Becket, it *is* too late. [*Exit*.

BECKET. Is it too late?
Too late on earth may be too soon in hell.

KNIGHTS. [*In the distance.*] Close the great gate—ho, there—upon the town.

BECKET'S RETAINERS. Shut the hall-doors. [*A pause*.

JOHN OF SALISBURY. You should have taken counsel with your friends
Before these bandits brake into your presence.
They seek—you make—occasion for your death.

BECKET. My counsel is already taken, John.
I am prepared to die.

JOHN OF SALISBURY. We are sinners all,
The best of all not all-prepared to die.

BECKET. God's will be done!

JOHN OF SALISBURY. Ay, well. God's will be done!

GRIM. [*Re-entering.*] My lord, the knights are arming in the garden
Beneath the sycamore.

BECKET. Good! let them arm.

GRIM. And one of the De Brocs is with them,—Robert,
The apostate monk that was with Randulf here.
He knows the twists and turnings of the place.

BECKET. No fear!

GRIM. No fear, my lord.

[*Crashes on the hall-doors. The* MONKS *flee.*

BECKET. [*Rising.*] Our dovecote flown!
I cannot tell why monks should all be cowards.

JOHN OF SALISBURY. Take refuge in your own cathedral, Thomas.

BECKET. Do they not fight the Great Fiend day by day?
Valour and holy life should go together.
Why should all monks be cowards!

JOHN OF SALISBURY. Are they so?
I say, take refuge in your own cathedral.

[*Bell rings for vespers till end of scene.*

GRIM. Vespers are beginning.
You should attend the office, give them heart.
They fear you slain: they dread they know not what.

BECKET. Ay, monks, not men.

GRIM. I am a monk, my lord.
Perhaps, my lord, you wrong us.
Some would stand by you to the death.

BECKET. Your pardon.

JOHN OF SALISBURY. He said, "Attend the office."

BECKET. Attend the office?

Why then—The Cross !—who bears my Cross before me ?
Methought they would have brain'd me with it, John.
[GRIM *takes it.*

GRIM. I ! Would that I could bear thy cross indeed !

BECKET. The Mitre !

JOHN OF SALISBURY. Will you wear it ? there !

BECKET. The Pall !
I go to meet my King ! [*Puts on the pall. Exeunt.*

SCENE 3.—*North Transept of Canterbury Cathedral. On the right hand a flight of steps leading to the Choir, another flight on the left, leading to the North Aisle. Winter afternoon slowly darkening.* MONKS *heard chanting the service.* ROSAMUND *kneeling.*

ROSAMUND. O blessed saint, O glorious Benedict,—
These arm'd men in the city, these fierce faces—
Thy holy follower founded Canterbury,
Save that dear head which now is Canterbury,
Save him, he saved my life, he saved my child,
Save him, his blood would darken Henry's name ;
Save him till, all as saintly as thyself,
He miss the searching flame of purgatory,
And pass at once perfect to Paradise.
[*Noise of steps and voices in the cloisters.*
Hark ! Is it they ? Coming ! He is not here—
Not yet, thank heaven. O save him !
[*Goes up steps leading to choir.*

BECKET (*entering, forced along by* JOHN OF SALISBURY *and* GRIM).

BECKET. No, I tell you !

I cannot bear a hand upon my person,
Why do you force me thus against my will?

GRIM. My lord, we force you from your enemies.

BECKET. As you would force a king from being crown'd.

[*Service stops.* MONKS *come down from the stairs that lead to the choir.*

MONKS. Here is the great Archbishop! He lives! he lives!

BECKET. Back, I say!
Go on with the office. Shall not Heaven be served
Tho' earth's last earthquake clash'd the minster-bells,
And the great deeps were broken up again,
And hiss'd against the sun? [*Noise in the cloisters.*

MONKS. The murderers, hark!
Let us hide! let us hide!

BECKET. What do these people fear?

GRIM. Those arm'd men in the cloister.

BECKET. Be not such cravens!
I will go out and meet them.

GRIM AND OTHERS. Shut the doors!
We will not have him slain before our face.

[*They close the doors of the transept. Knocking.*

Fly, fly, my lord, before they burst the doors!

[*Knocking.*

BECKET. Why, these are our own monks who follow'd us!
And will you bolt them out, and have *them* slain?
Undo the doors: the church is not a castle:
Stand by, make way!

[*Opens the doors. Enter* MONKS *from cloister.*

MONKS. A score of knights all arm'd with swords and axes—

To the choir, to the choir!

[MONKS *divide, part flying by the stairs on the right, part by those on the left. The rush of these last bears* BECKET *along with them some way up the steps, where he is left standing alone.*

JOHN OF SALISBURY. No, to the crypt!

GRIM. To the crypt? no—no,
To the chapel of St. Blaise beneath the roof!

BECKET. Oh, no, not either way, nor any way
Save by that way which leads thro' night to light.

Enter the four KNIGHTS. JOHN OF SALISBURY *flies to the altar of St. Benedict.*

FITZURSE. Here, here, King's men!

[*Catches hold of the last flying* MONK.
Where is the traitor Becket?

BECKET. Here.
No traitor to the King, but Priest of God,
Primate of England. [*Descending into the transept.*
I am he ye seek.
What would ye have of me?

FITZURSE. Your life.

DE TRACY. Your life.

DE MORVILLE. Save that you will absolve the bishops.

BECKET. Never,—
Except they make submission to the Church.
You had my answer to that cry before.

DE MORVILLE. Why, then you are a dead man; flee!

BECKET. I will not.
I am readier to be slain, than thou to slay.
Hugh, I know well thou hast but half a heart
To bathe this sacred pavement with my blood.

God pardon thee and these, but God's full curse
Shatter you all to pieces if ye harm
One of my flock!

FITZURSE. Seize him and carry him!
Come with us—nay—thou art our prisoner—come!

[FITZURSE *lays hold of the* ARCHBISHOP'S *pall.*

BECKET. Down!

[*Throws him headlong.*

DE MORVILLE. Ay, make him prisoner, do not harm the man.

FITZURSE. [*Advances with drawn sword.*] I told thee that I should remember thee!

BECKET. Profligate pander!

FITZURSE. Do you hear that? strike, strike.

[*Strikes the* ARCHBISHOP, *and wounds him in the forehead.*

BECKET. [*Covers his eyes with his hand.*] I do commend my cause to God.

FITZURSE. Strike him, Tracy!

ROSAMUND. [*Rushing down steps from the choir.*] No, No, No, No!
Mercy, mercy,
As you would hope for mercy.

FITZURSE. Strike, I say.

GRIM. O God, O noble knights, O sacrilege!

FITZURSE. Strike!

DE TRACY. There is my answer then.

[*Sword falls on* GRIM'S *arm and glances from it, wounding* BECKET.

DE BRITO. This last to rid thee of a world of brawls!

BECKET. [*Falling on his knees.*] Into Thy hands, O Lord, into Thy hands!—— [*Sinks prone.*

DE BRITO. The traitor's dead, and will arise no more.

[DE BRITO, DE TRACY, FITZURSE, *rush out, crying "King's men!"* DE MORVILLE *follows slowly. Flashes of lightning thro' the Cathedral.*[1] ROSAMUND *seen kneeling by the body of* BECKET.

[1] [A tremendous thunderstorm actually broke over the Cathedral as the murderers were leaving it.

Mr. Walter Pollock records in his *Impressions of Irving*, p. 138: "As regards *Becket*, I have said before that the play and the part had a strange influence over Irving. It was not to me, but to my wife that he once said that no dramatic poetry and no character had ever so influenced him. . . . 'You know,' my wife said, 'that people talk of your having "made" the play.' His reply was emphatic: 'No, no,' he said, 'the play made me. It changed my whole view of life.'" —ED.]

NOTES ON THE FALCON.

p. 221. *The Falcon.* [First published in 1884.—Ed.] Founded on a story in Boccaccio (the ninth novel of the fifth day of the *Decameron*), and produced by Mr. and Mrs. Kendal at the St. James' Theatre, who played it for sixty-seven nights.

[Hazlitt first suggested the story as suitable for stage treatment. Fanny Kemble called the play "an exquisite little idyll in action like one of A. de Musset's." Mrs. Brotherton writes to me: "Well do I remember your father reading *The Falcon* to me (still in MS.), in a little attic at Farringford. The ivy outside was blowing against the casement like pattering rain, all the time. When he had finished he softly closed the simple 'copy-book' it was written in, and said softly, 'Stately and tender, isn't it?' exactly as if he were commenting on another man's work—and no more just comment could have come from the whole world of critics."—Ed.]

NOTES ON THE FORESTERS.

By the Editor.

[Written eleven years before publication in 1881. First published and performed in 1892.

On March 25th *The Foresters* was produced at New York by Daly, the incidental music being by Sir Arthur Sullivan. It gave my father great pleasure to hear that American people were "appreciative of the fancy and of the beauty, and especially of the songs and of the wise sayings about life in which the woodland play abounds."[1] The houses were packed and the play had a long and most successful run.

Before the production my father wrote to Daly:

I wish you all success with my *Robin Hood and Maid Marian*. From what I know of Miss Ada Rehan I am sure that she will play her part to perfection, and I am certain that under your management, with the music by one so popular as Sir Arthur Sullivan, with the costumes fashioned after the old designs in the British Museum, with the woodland scenes taken from Mr. Whymper's beautiful pictures of the Sherwood of to-day, my play will be produced to advantage both in America and in England.

[1] Jowett.

I am told that your company is good, and that Mr. Jefferson once belonged to it. When he was in England, I saw him play *Rip Van Winkle*, and assuredly nothing could have been better.

With all cordial greetings to my American friends, I remain faithfully yours, TENNYSON.

And he received the following from Miss Ada Rehan:

Let me add my congratulations to the many on the success of *The Foresters*. I cannot tell you how delighted I was when I felt and saw, from the first, the joy it was giving to our large audience. Its charm is felt by all. Let me thank you for myself for the honour of playing your *Maid Marian*, which I have learned to love, for while I am playing the part I feel all its beauty and simplicity and sweetness, which make me feel for the time a happier and a better woman. I am indeed proud of its great success for your sake as well as my own.

P.S.—The play is now one week old, and each audience has been larger than the last and all as sympathetic as the first.

And Professor Jebb wrote:

Being here on my way to the Johns Hopkins University at Baltimore, where I have some Lectures to give, I naturally went to see *The Foresters* at Augustin Daly's last night. The Theatre, which is of moderate size, was densely packed, and as I had not engaged my seat by cablegram from Liverpool, I bore no resemblance, in respect of spacious comfort, to the ideal spectator, the masher or "dude," depicted on the play-bill which I send you by this post. I was a highly compressed and squalid

object in a back seat, amid a seething mass of humanity, but I saw the play very well. It was very cordially received and was well acted, I thought, especially by Ada Rehan and Drew. The fairy scene in the third Act was perfectly lovely, and the lyrics were everywhere beautifully given. The mounting of the play was excellent throughout.

The criticism of *The Foresters* which pleased my father most was in a letter addressed to Lady Martin (Miss Helen Faucit) by the eminent Shakespearian scholar, Mr. Horace Furness of Philadelphia, when the piece was being performed in New York:

After dinner we went to see *The Foresters*. Men and women—of a different time, to be sure, but none too good "for human nature's daily food"—live their idyllic lives before you, and you feel that all is good, very good. The atmosphere is so real, and we fall into it so completely, that, Americans though we be through and through, we can listen with hearty assent to the chorus that "There is no land like England," and that "There are no wives like English wives." Nay, come to think of it, that song was encored. It was charming, charming from beginning to end. And Miss Rehan acted to perfection. I had to leave in the midnight train for home, and during two hours' driving through the black night, I smoked and reflected on the unalloyed charm of such a drama. And to see the popularity, too! It had been running many weeks—six, I think—and the theatre was full, not a seat unoccupied. I do revel, I confess, in such a proof as this that there will always be a full response to what is fine and good, and that the modern sensational French drama is not our true exponent.

p. 302. (Act I. Sc. iii.) *To Sleep.* First published in *New Review,* 1891, and set to music by my mother. (See Mlle. Janotha's edition of Lady Tennyson's songs, published by Novello.)

p. 319. line 1. (Act II. Sc. i.) *wickentree,* mountain-ash.

p. 339. Act II. Sc. ii. *ad finem. The whole stage lights up, and fairies are seen swinging on boughs and nestling in hollow trunks, etc.*

My father said to Mr. Daly : "I don't care for *The Foresters* as I do for *Becket* and *Harold.* Irving suggested the fairies in my *Robin Hood,* else I should not have dreamed of trenching on Shakespeare's ground in that way. Then Irving wrote to me that the play was not 'sensational' enough for an English public. It is a woodland play—a pastoral without shepherds. The great stage-drama is wholly unlike most of the drama of modern times. I do not like the idea of every scene being obliged to end with a *bang.*" About "There is no land like England," he added, "I wrote that song when I was nineteen. It has a beastly chorus against the French, and I must alter that if you will have it."

My father recommended Daly to look at Whymper's pictures of Sherwood Forest, which he straightway bought in order that they might be copied for the scenes.

p. 357. (Act III. Sc. i.) *torrents of eddying bark.* I heard my father first use these words about the great trunks of the Spanish chestnuts in Cowdray Park near Midhurst. He and I stayed in Sherwood Forest in 1881, at the time when he was writing *The Foresters.*

pp. 366, 367. (Act III. Sc. i.) [Instead of the short scene between Robin and Marian, beginning "Honour to thee, brave Marian," to "my will, and made it thine," my father had written in the first proof of the play the following lively and charming scene, which he cut out when Miss Mary Anderson was to have acted Marian:[1] —

ROBIN.

Honour to thee, brave Marian, and thy Kate.
I know them arrant knaves in Nottingham.
One half of this shall go to those that they have wrong'd,
One half shall pass into our treasury.

MARIAN.

My father has none with him. See to him, Kate.
[*Exit* KATE.

ROBIN.

Where lies that cask of wine whereof we plunder'd
The Norman prelate?

[1] She fell ill and left the stage, else she was to have played in *The Foresters* and *The Cup.*

LITTLE JOHN.

In that oak, were twelve
Can stand upright, nor touch each other.[1]

ROBIN.

Good!
Roll it in here. These beggars and these friars
Shall drink the health of our new woodland Queen.
[*Exeunt* ROBIN'S *men*.
(*To* MARIAN) And now that thou hast triumph'd as our Queen,
I have a mind to embrace thee as our Queen.

MARIAN (*frantically*).

Quiet, Robin, quiet. You lovers are such summer flies, always buzzing at the face of your lady.

ROBIN.

Say rather we are bees that fly to the flower for honey.

MARIAN.

Your soul should worship her soul, your heart her heart, and all your thoughts should be higher-winged in the spiritual heaven of love.

ROBIN.

Ay, but we lovers are not cherubim, wings and no more.

[1] The oak described here was standing in Sherwood Forest when we visited it in 1881.

MARIAN.

True, Robin, thou art plump enough for my robin, but thy face is too gaunt for a cherub's.

ROBIN.

Yet I would I were a winged cherub, that I might fly and hide myself in thy bosom.

MARIAN.

Ay, but, cherub, if thou flewest so close as that, I should fly like the maid in the heathen fable when the would-be god lost his nymph in the wood.

ROBIN.

What was she?

MARIAN.

I forget. The Maid Marian of these times belike.

ROBIN.

And how did he lose her?

MARIAN.

As many men lose many women if they fly too near —as thou mayest lose me in this forest. She turned herself into a laurel.

ROBIN.

I would have gathered the leaves, and made a crown of it.

MARIAN.

And the laurel would have withered in a day, and the nymph would have been dead wood to thee for ever.

ROBIN.

No, no; I would have clasped and kissed, and warmed the dead wood till it broke again into living leaf.

MARIAN.

Well, well, to tell love's truth, I sighed for a touch of thy lips a year ago, but the Sheriff has come between us. Is it not all over now—gone like a deer that hath escaped from thine arrow?

ROBIN.

What deer, when I have marked him, ever escaped from mine arrow? The Sheriff—over is it? Wilt thou give me thy hand upon that?

MARIAN.

Take it.

ROBIN.

The Sheriff! [*Kisses her hand.*
This ring cries out against thee. Say it again.
And by this ring, the lips that never breathed
Love's falsehood to true maid will seal love's truth
On those sweet lips that dare to dally with it.

ED.]

CROSSING THE BAR

Crossing the Bar

Sunset & evening star,
And one clear call for me.
And may there be no moaning of the bar,
When I put out to sea,

But such a tide as moving seems asleep,
Too full for sound & foam,
When that which drew from out the boundless deep
Turns again home.

Twilight & evening bell,
And after that the dark:
And may there be no sadness of farewell,
When I embark;

For tho' from out our bourne of Time & Place
The flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face,
When I have crost the bar.

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